

New Laws Passed Regarding Teen Drivers and Child Booster Seat Usage

Parents need to be aware of recent new laws that go into effect September 1 regarding driving and child passenger safety:

Seat belts:

- All vehicle occupants must be strapped in. Violations are subject to fines up to \$200.

Child car seats:

- Any child younger than 8 – unless they are taller than 4 feet 9 inches – must be in a safety seat. Only warning tickets will be issued until June 1, after which fines of \$25 will be imposed.

Cellphones:

- No one younger than 18 can use a cellphone while driving.
- No one of any age can use a cellphone in a school zone, unless it's to make an emergency call, the vehicle is stopped or a hands-free device is used. Fines will be up to \$200.

Licensing:

- For those younger than 18, a driving skills test will become mandatory to get a license.
- The prohibitions against driving from midnight to 5 a.m. or driving with more than one person younger than 21 (unless a family member) **are extended from six months to one year** after obtaining a license.

Teen Drivers

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America. Inexperience, driving while distracted by cell phone use and other teen passengers, and failure to wear seatbelts are all contributing factors.

Parents can help their teens become safer drivers by taking an active role. Supervise practice driving and be a good role model by practicing safe driving yourself. Remind teens of the new laws regarding cell phone use and texting while driving. Remind them that they and all passengers are required to wear seatbelts.

Other recent laws passed that may be of interest to parents and their teens:

Insurance:

- Driving with a suspended license or without insurance gets more costly – up to 180 days in jail and fines up to \$2,000.
- So does driving without a valid license or uninsured and causing injury or death in an accident – up to a year in jail and a maximum \$4,000 fine.

Motorcycles:

- Proof that a certified training course has been completed will be needed to get a license.
- No passengers younger than 5 can ride. Fines are \$200.

DWI:

- Police can draw blood from drunken-driving suspects if records show a history of DWI offenses. Such drivers cannot refuse the test.