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Work-Related Motor Vehicle Crashes: *Preventing Injuries to Young Drivers*

September 2013

What Parents Should Know

Teens and young adults have higher crash rates than any other group. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of work-related fatalities among young people in the United States ages 16 to 24.

From 2003 to 2010, 843 workers ages 16 to 24 died in motor vehicle crashes at work. These incidents accounted for 22% of all workplace fatalities in this age group. In 67% of these incidents, the young worker was driving the vehicle involved in the crash.¹

Federal child labor laws severely limit workplace driving by youth under 18 years of age. Although most young adults are allowed by law to drive on the job starting at age 18, they lack the maturity and driving experience of their older co-workers. Young drivers might also be more likely to engage in driving behaviors that increase their risk of injury or death, such as not wearing seat belts or driving while distracted.

If you are a parent of a teen or young adult who drives as part of his or her job, it is important that you understand the risk for motor vehicle crashes at work. This fact sheet gives information about Federal and state laws that cover workplace driving and offers recommendations for you and your son or daughter for preventing motor vehicle crashes among younger workers. Finally, it provides links to useful resources on the Internet.

What risk factors can lead to crashes among young drivers?

- Driving inexperience
- Fatigue
- Inconsistent seat belt use
- Tendency to overestimate driving skills
- Desire to meet employer time expectations
- Distracted driving: talking on cell phones, text messaging, adjusting controls, eating and drinking, or interacting with other passengers
- Immaturity: poor impulse control, judgment, and decision-making skills
- Difficulty in recognizing and responding to traffic hazards



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¹This research was conducted with restricted access to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the BLS.

What laws protect youth who drive for work?

- The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) is the Federal law that includes standards to protect young workers. This law applies to businesses engaged in interstate commerce with gross revenues of at least \$500,000 per year.
- Under FLSA, non-agricultural workers younger than age 17 are prohibited from driving a motor vehicle on a public road or working as an “outside helper” (that is, riding or hanging on to a motor vehicle outside the cab while helping to transport or deliver goods).
- Under FLSA, agricultural workers younger than age 16 are not permitted to drive a bus, truck, or automobile to transport passengers, or to ride on a tractor as a passenger or helper. At age 16, the FLSA no longer applies to young agricultural workers. However, young agricultural workers driving on public roads are not exempt from state graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws and state traffic laws.

FLSA Limitations for Teens Who Drive for Work*

17-year-olds may drive on the job if all the following requirements are met:

- The driving is limited to daylight hours;
- The youth has a state license valid for the type of driving involved in the job performed;
- The youth has successfully completed a state-approved driver education course and has no record of any moving violation at the time of hire;
- The automobile or truck is equipped with a seat belt for the driver and any passengers and the employer has instructed the youth that the seat belts must be used when driving the vehicle;
- The automobile or truck does not exceed 6,000 pounds gross vehicle weight; and
- The driving is only occasional and incidental to the youth’s employment. This means that the youth may spend no more than 1/3 of their work time in any workday and no more than 20% of their work time in any workweek driving.

On-the-job driving for 17-year-olds may not involve:

- Towing vehicles;
- Route deliveries or route sales;
- Transportation for hire of property, goods, or passengers;
- Making urgent, time-sensitive deliveries (such as pizza deliveries);
- Transporting more than 3 passengers, including employees of the employer;
- Driving beyond a 30 mile radius of the teen’s place of employment;
- Making more than 2 trips away from the primary place of employment in any single day to deliver the employer’s goods to a customer; or
- Making more than 2 trips away from the primary place of employment in any single day to transport passengers other than employees of the employer.

* Adapted from: US Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division Teen Driving on the Job Fact Sheet (<http://www.dol.gov/whd/childlabor.htm>).

In addition, individual states may have stricter limits on workplace driving by youth. State GDL laws and state traffic laws contain basic road safety rules that cover and help protect drivers of all ages. GDL laws apply to novice drivers, generally younger than 18 years. All GDL laws require a three stage process—learner’s permit (supervised driving), intermediate (independent driving with restrictions), and unrestricted driving. As drivers move through these stages, they are given extra driving privileges. Depending on the state, these may include driving at night or with teen passengers.

Fatal motor vehicle crashes at work among young workers: case report.

Pizza Delivery Driver



A 17-year-old pizza delivery driver was killed in a motor vehicle crash while on a delivery run. The youth was working his first night as a pizza delivery person at a small independent pizzeria in a suburban area. He was in the process of applying for his employment certificate (working papers) as required by state law and had reportedly obtained his driver's license a few months before. The youth arrived at work at 4:30 p.m. One of the experienced deliverers explained the job to him. When taking orders it was company policy to tell customers that it would take

longer to deliver the order than was actually necessary so that drivers did not have to rush. The young worker was scheduled to work until 7:30 or 8:30 p.m., depending on the workload. He was using his father's car, a 4-door sedan.

On his first delivery run, he delivered three pizzas to three different addresses. At 6:20 p.m., the staff took a delivery order that the youth went out to deliver to a home located less than a mile away. It was a straightforward route down a well-traveled secondary road with a posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour (mph), then onto a local road leading into a suburban neighborhood. It was still daylight as the youth drove down the secondary road, coming to an "S" turn with a curve advisory sign of 30 mph. A severe rainstorm with heavy winds was in progress at that time. Turning left to complete the second turn, the youth lost control of the car and spun off the road, hitting a large tree broadside with the driver's side of his car. He was found conscious and reportedly left the vehicle to check on the damage. The first police officer arrived about 5 minutes after the crash was reported. The youth was disoriented and showed signs of possible internal injuries. Emergency medical services arrived a few minutes later and transported the youth to a Level II trauma center where he died from his injuries at 11:30 p.m.

Police investigation reports indicate that the youth was not wearing a seat belt at the time of the crash. The police impounded and inspected the car, finding that the front tires were worn and in poor condition. Different air pressures (20-30 pounds per square inch) were noted in each tire. There was no indication of alcohol or drug involvement.

Learning points for parents and young workers:

- **Be aware of tasks involved in young workers' jobs:** Parents can ask their children about tasks they will perform at work. Parents of youth under 18 years of age should be aware of [Federal](#) and [state](#) labor laws that limit workplace driving by young workers. Parents of all teen and young adult workers can ask their children if they are concerned about the safety of any aspect of their job. Using this information, parents and young workers can discuss strategies for addressing these concerns.
- **Encourage the use of seat belts by young drivers and passengers:** [State traffic laws](#) in all but one state (New Hampshire) require all drivers to use seat belts. In this case, it is possible that the youth who died might have survived had he been wearing a seat belt. It is important for parents to model safe driving behaviors, including seat belt use.
- **Talk to your young driver about driving in bad weather:** Parents can encourage young drivers to take additional precautions such as reducing speed and braking gently in the event of bad weather or not to drive under such conditions.
- **Ask young drivers if their employer has provided driver training:** Training at the time of hire and periodic "refresher" training can improve driving performance. In this case, it is likely that the young driver would have benefitted from the greater awareness and experience that classroom and/or behind-the-wheel training would have given him.

Learning points for parents and young workers: (continued)

- **Keep vehicles in proper operating condition:** The police reported that the front tires on the victim's vehicle were in poor condition, which may have been a factor in losing control on the wet road. It is strongly recommended that parents who provide vehicles for youth to drive for work or other purposes maintain those vehicles in good operating condition. Doing so demonstrates the importance of vehicle maintenance to young drivers. It also gives parents the opportunity to teach the principles of routine vehicle maintenance to young drivers.

How can parents help prevent motor vehicle crashes among young workers?

Parents play a key role in promoting safe driving by teens and young adult workers. You can have a positive influence on your children's driving behavior on and off the job. As a parent, you can model safe driving habits, set clear driving expectations, and supervise your son's or daughter's driving. You can help to prevent workplace crashes and reduce the severity of crashes that may occur.



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- Ask your son or daughter about job tasks involving driving or riding in a motor vehicle.
- Ask your son or daughter if their employer has written policies and procedures for the safe operation of motor vehicles. If these have not been discussed with your son or daughter, make sure they ask their supervisor for guidance on safe motor vehicle operation. Generally these employer policies cover driver training, employee and employer responsibilities, seat belt use, distracted and impaired driving, fatigue management, emergency and non-emergency procedures, and inspection and maintenance of vehicles in use.
- Ask your son or daughter if he or she is receiving job training related to vehicle safety.
- Ensure that any family-owned vehicle used by your son or daughter is well-maintained, in good repair, and at a minimum, equipped with ABS brakes and airbags.
- Be familiar with child labor laws and state graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws that limit a teen worker's ability to drive for work, commute to or from work at certain times of the day, or carry teen passengers.
- Conduct a driving evaluation of your teen. Help your young driver learn to recognize traffic hazards and maintain concentration on driving. Have the young driver describe what he or she sees, consider what is likely to happen, and describe what action he or she intends to take. Provide feedback and training for observed deficiencies.
- Reinforce the importance of using seat belts, obeying speed limits, and maintaining a safe following distance.
- Set rules to prohibit your son or daughter from using electronic devices while driving, even if state laws allow them.
- Set a zero-tolerance policy for drunk or drugged driving.
- Model safe driving behaviors when you are behind the wheel.
- Be alert for signs of fatigue or stress as your son or daughter balances the demands of school, work, home, and other activities.
- Talk about safe use of tractors, mobile equipment, bicycles, golf carts, and all-terrain vehicles – remember that not all motor vehicle crashes occur on public roads.
- Consult the many resources that can help you engage your teen in meaningful discussions about safe driving (see "Driver safety tips for teens and parents").

For more information:

Federal child labor laws and safe work for youth:

<http://www.youthrules.dol.gov>

http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/Teen_Driving.pdf

<http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html>

<http://www.youthrules.gov/support/toolkit/index.htm>

Driver safety tips for teens and parents:

http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html

http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/teendriving/pages/teen_driving.aspx/

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers>

<http://trafficsafety.org/>

<http://trafficsafety.org/promo/the-novice-drivers-road-map> (fee applies)

<http://www.underyourinfluence.com/>

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles>

Motor vehicle crashes:

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-30/nca/STSI/USA%20WEB%20REPORT.HTM>

Graduated licensing laws and state traffic laws:

<http://www.iihs.org/laws/GraduatedLicenseIntro.aspx>

<http://www.iihs.org/laws/default.aspx>

Hours-of-service (HOS) regulations:

<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/topics/hos/index.htm>

NIOSH motor vehicle safety Web page:

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/motorvehicle>