



NEW JERSEY
TEEN DRIVER STUDY COMMISSION
NEWS RELEASE

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**Teen Driver Study Commission Report Details Comprehensive
Recommendations for
Improving Teen Driver Safety in New Jersey**

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Trenton – The Teen Driver Study Commission, appointed by Governor Jon S. Corzine and the State Legislature to assess the state of teen driving in New Jersey, today released a comprehensive report with 47 recommendations to help reduce teen crashes and ultimately save lives.

A series of fatal crashes involving New Jersey teens during the past two years prompted the Legislature to introduce a bill, which was signed into law by Governor Corzine in March 2007, establishing the 15-member Teen Driver Study Commission. Charged with conducting an in-depth review of all aspects of teen driving, the Commission reviewed the latest national and international research; analyzed New Jersey licensing, crash and motor vehicle violations data; examined teen licensing requirements in other states and countries; held three public hearings to gather information at a grassroots level; and met with experts from law enforcement, driver education, and child psychology to gain further insight into the issue.

The report's 47 recommendations are divided into seven key categories: the Graduated Drivers License (GDL), driver education, driver training, enforcement/judicial, insurance industry, schools, and technology. Each of the recommendations includes a "champion," the entity or entities charged with ensuring the recommendation is implemented.

The Commission's report notes that while all recommendations merit further study and/or enactment, the 14 recommendations highlighted below are considered essential for preventing further teen crashes in New Jersey, and should be addressed immediately. Those recommendations are:

- Develop an event-based GDL monitoring program that includes sanctions (training, suspension and postponement) that effectively deter GDL and non-serious and serious motor vehicle violations.
- Until event-based monitoring and enhanced sanctions are implemented, ban plea agreements for traffic offenses committed by GDL holders.
- Implement the programming changes necessary to ensure that MVC's current and pending computer system can accommodate all components of the GDL law.
- Develop a GDL identifier that must be affixed to a vehicle when driven by a permit or probationary license holder.
- Require a parent/guardian to attend a teen driver orientation program with his or her teen prior to applying for a permit.
- Require teens to complete a minimum number of hours of certified practice driving during the permit phase.
- Extend the permit phase from a minimum of six months to one year for all new drivers 16 to 20 years of age.
- Limit the number of passengers in the probationary phase to one regardless of the passenger's relationship to the driver.
- Sanction, in addition to the teen driver, all passengers 16 to 20 years of age on a permit, probationary or basic license, who violate the GDL passenger and safety belt restrictions.
- Lower the nighttime driving hours restriction from 12 a.m. to 11 p.m. for probationary license holders.
- Close the loophole in the seat belt law to ensure all back seat passengers 18 years of age and older buckle up.
- Appropriate funding for driver education through the GDL-mandated Driver Education Fund.
- Develop and deliver to public and private schools a standardized traffic safety/driver education curriculum and incorporate it into New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards for students in grades K-12.
- Amend the GDL law and the corresponding regulations to clearly define six hours of behind-the-wheel driver training.

According to Division of Highway Traffic Safety Director and Commission Chairperson Pam Fischer, the report provides a solid foundation on which to build a series of initiatives designed to prevent further tragedies from occurring on New Jersey's roadways.

"Our work in New Jersey has really just begun," Fischer said. "While this report lays out a comprehensive plan for improving driver licensing and education for teens 16 to 20 years of age, we will need the support of the Legislature, schools, government and law enforcement officials, the courts, businesses and the many other stakeholders who play a critical role in its implementation. As we move forward, we welcome the support of any and all individuals and organizations who can help us meet our goal of ensuring that teen drivers are protected behind-the-wheel."

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among teens in the United States. Nationally, an average of 6,000 teens are killed and 300,000 are injured each year in automobile crashes. In 2006, there were 55,792 teen crashes in New Jersey. While many of these crashes were not life threatening, 48 teen drivers and 19 teen passengers driven by teens died. Speed, distractions, inexperience, and the lack of seat belt use were prevalent factors in these fatal crashes. In some cases, the teen driver had multiple violations on his or her driving record.

Presented to Governor Corzine and the Legislature today, the report includes an Executive Summary and detailed information on the scope of the program at both a national and State level, an overview of a “new and improved” Graduated Drivers License program, as well as detailed background on each recommendation. The report is available on the Division’s web site at www.njsaferoads.com. A list of the Commission members can also be found on the web site.

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