

Encourage Safe Driving

As the parent, you are in the best position to help ensure that your son or daughter drives safely and obeys the Passenger Restriction and the Time Restriction. **Don't just rely on the Police to do it.** Here are some tips to help enforce the Restrictions and to encourage safe driving.

- **Speed kills.** The daily newspapers and the evening news are filled with stories about young drivers who were speeding when a serious accident occurred. Review the accident statistics with your child. **Few** of the young drivers in the crashes **ever thought it could happen to them.** Make your Junior Operator understand, in the strongest terms possible, that speeding and other forms of reckless driving can and often do result in serious, even deadly, consequences.
- **Alcohol and drugs.** Most parents think their kids don't drink or use drugs. However, we repeatedly read news stories of accidents involving teen drivers in which alcohol was a factor. Where did they get it? Often it's from their own home or from a friend's home. Make sure the Junior Operator does not have access to alcohol in your home. And, know whom they hang around with because drug and alcohol use often results from peer pressure.
- **Seat belts save lives** and they save people from more serious injury. Peer pressure often discourages new young drivers from wearing a seat belt because it's not considered "cool." Have you ever seen people who have suffered serious brain injuries after being thrown from a vehicle? Tell your Junior Operator (repeatedly if necessary) to always wear the seat belt! Make sure **you** set a good example.
- **Draw up a contract** between you and your child. You agree to provide car privileges as long as your child remains a safe driver and complies with all laws and family rules. Include rewards for safe driving over a period of time and penalties or loss of privileges for violations of the motor vehicle laws or of "family rules."

More on Alcohol & Drugs

Have a serious talk with your newly licensed teen driver about the very high crash rate for new drivers of the same age group. Consider these other points:

Tell your child that his or her priority has to be to develop a responsible attitude as a driver and to develop the maturity and skills that can only come with experience behind the wheel.

Disclose your awareness that some teens will use alcohol and/or drugs, **even though it is illegal**, and then drive a motor vehicle.

State that alcohol and/or drug use by teen drivers only increases the already high risk of a crash. Cite the fatality rates in this brochure for 16-18 year olds who were drunk.

Explain what you expect from your child as a licensed teen driver. Also explain what your likely reaction will be if you discover he or she operated a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Stress that using alcohol or drugs and operating a motor vehicle is not only irresponsible, it presents an extreme danger for both the driver and everyone else on that road. Also stress that being a passenger in a vehicle with others who have used alcohol or drugs is not any safer or smarter.

Whatever you say as a parent or guardian, be clear, be concise and be ready to back it up.

As a parent or guardian, you can make a big difference if you try. Try!

More Information

If you need more information in an easy to read Q & A format, entitled: "**FAQs About Learner's Permits & Junior Operator Licenses**," please visit our RMV website at www.mass.gov/rmv, and click on **Junior Operators**. You may also obtain a copy by calling the RMV at 617-351-4500. If any of the laws governing JOL are amended, changes will be posted on the RMV website.

Protecting Your Young Driver

A Message to Parents & Guardians



What you need to know about the JOL Law

Deval L. Patrick, Governor

Timothy P. Murray, Lieutenant Governor

Jeffrey B. Mullan, Secretary & CEO of Transportation

Rachel Kaprielian, Registrar

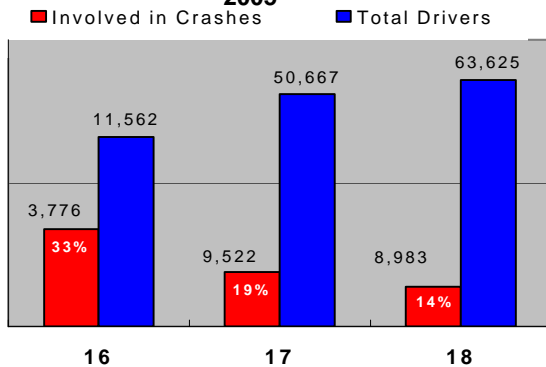
Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles
P.O. Box 55889
Boston, MA 02205-5889

Accident Rates for Young Drivers

As a parent, here are the crash statistics you need to know. There is no "good news" involving crash statistics for our youngest drivers. The number of crashes in Massachusetts involving 16, 17, or 18 year old drivers is appalling. The youngest group of drivers, 16 year olds, has the highest percentage of serious accidents of those age groups.

- 33% of 16 year old drivers will be in a serious crash.
- 19% of 17 year old drivers will be in a serious crash.
- 14% of 18 year old drivers will be in a serious crash.

Licensed Drivers vs. Crashes in MA (16-18 yrs old)
2005



The Statistics: State law requires a driver to file a report with the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) for any crash involving a death, serious bodily injury or property damage in excess of \$1,000. The numbers above are obtained from these reports.

The added effect of alcohol:

To make matters worse, some young drivers less than 21 years old increase the chance of a crash by drinking and driving-even though it is illegal. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that across the USA in 2005:

- 11% of 16 year old drivers killed in a crash were legally drunk;
- 18% of 17 year old drivers killed in a crash were legally drunk;
- 24% of 18 year old drivers killed in a crash were legally drunk.

What is the Passenger Restriction?

As a Junior Operator, your child may not operate a motor vehicle within the first six (6) months after receiving a Junior Operator's License (JOL) while any passenger under the age of 18 is in the vehicle (other than the Operator or an immediate family member [siblings]), *unless* the Junior Operator is accompanied by a person who is at least 21 years old . . .

- who has at least one year of driving experience, and
- holds a valid driver's license from Massachusetts or another state, and
- is occupying a seat beside the Junior Operator.

The purpose of the restriction is to provide an opportunity to develop good driving skills free from possible distractions from peers.

Why A Passenger Restriction?

In March 2000, *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* reported on a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore. **The study concluded that teenage drivers are more likely to be killed in an accident if there are teenagers or young adult passengers with them.** A 16 year old driver with **one passenger** is **39%** more likely to die in an accident than when driving alone. It increases to **86%** when **two passengers** are present and soars to **182%** with **three or more passengers!**

Legal Penalties for a Violation:

A Junior Operator who violates the passenger restriction is subject to a license suspension of:

- 30 days for a first offense
- 60 days for a second offense
- 90 days for a subsequent offense

The passenger restriction will be put on hold while the Junior Operator's license is suspended. It will resume when the suspension period has been completed.

What is the Time Restriction?

A Junior Operator may not operate a motor vehicle during the hours of 12:00 a.m. (midnight) to 5:00 a.m. unless accompanied by a parent or legal guardian.

Why A Time Restriction?

Accident rates are higher for our youngest drivers late at night . . .

- Generally, there are fewer cars on the road late at night and that may encourage speeding, drag racing, and taking more chances at higher speeds.
- Young drivers may also be tired when coming home from a part-time job or be rushing home to make a curfew.
- The use of alcohol and drugs may be more prevalent at late night parties. These substances slow reflexes and impair judgment. Having several friends in the car may also contribute to inattention and more reckless forms of driving.

The Johns Hopkins study also found that the accident rate increased significantly during early-morning hours when passengers were present.

Statistics indicated higher accident rates for teenagers after 10:00 p.m. and even higher rates after midnight!

Legal Penalties for a Violation:

A violator of the Time Restriction is considered to be unlicensed. **It is a criminal offense** and the Junior Operator may be arrested and punished by a fine and the license may be suspended.

Note: New changes to the JOL law take effect on March 31, 2007, including much tougher suspension and financial penalties for violations of the Passenger and Time Restrictions, and other motor vehicle laws. Check the RMV's Website (www.mass.gov/rmv) for more information.