

10 Tips for Teens Safety on the Road During Prom Season

As we start thinking about prom season and the celebratory time that follows, it's important to take a few moments to talk with teens about keeping themselves and others safe during this exciting time.

Teenagers are especially at risk on the road as motor vehicle accidents are the number one killer of teens in the nation. According to the CDC, ten teens die every day from injuries sustained in car wrecks, and Massachusetts teenagers are no exception. Each year in the Commonwealth, junior operators – drivers under the age of 18 –are involved in more than 20,000 car crashes, more than any other age group of drivers in the state.

These tips will help keep you (or your teen) safe on the road during prom season, and beyond.

1) Avoid driving if you can.

Get a group of friends together and rent a limo, or ask a cool relative to act as your chauffer if a limo isn't in your budget.

2) Don't drink & drive.

Each year in the U.S., over 10,000 people are killed and 350,000 injured due do drunk driving. Everyone thinks it won't happen to them.

3) Don't get in the car with someone who's been drinking.

Have a back-up plan or someone you can call if your ride has been drinking.

4) Buckle your seatbelt.

In 2010, the use of seat belts in passenger vehicles saved an estimated 12,546 lives. And according to the 2009 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) Controlled Intersection Study found that seat-belt use continued to be lower among 16 to 24 year-olds than other age groups.

5) Refrain from using your cell phone and other mobile devices while driving.

A University of Utah study shows that distractions from cell phone use impair drivers' concentration and reaction times as much as a driver with a .08 blood alcohol concentration, the illegal limit.

6) Save texting for the parking lot.

A Clemson University study shows that text messaging and iPods cause drivers to leave their lanes 10 percent more often than undistracted drivers.

7) Create a driving playlist before you turn on your car.

Surfing through the radio or your MP3 player to find a good song takes your attention away from the road and is another distraction. According to a study released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), 80% of crashes and 65% of near-crashes involve some form of driver distraction.

8) Follow the speed limits – they exist for your safety.

More than half of teenage drivers involved in motor vehicle accidents were speeding at the time of the incident. Breaking the speed limit is illegal and dangerous.

9) Don't let road rage get the best of you.

Road rage inhibits logic, fosters erratic behavior on the road and can quickly escalate into a wreck. Separate your emotions from your driving.

10) Disable incoming and outgoing calls.

When behind the wheel, use a service like DriveAssist, ZoomSafer or cellCONTROL, or simply turn your phone off.

April to June have been shown to be some of the most dangerous months for teens as they attend proms, celebrate graduations and kick-off summer vacation. Talk with your teen about safe driving and responsible behavior. As a driver, you have a responsibility to yourself, everyone else in your car, and everyone else on the road to act responsibly and drive safely.