Every day in America, there is at least one passenger from the ages of 8 to 12 that dies in a car crash. We want to help end these tragedies, but we know this mission starts with you! There are simple things you can know and do to help stay safe. You can also tell your friends. That’s what Teens in the Driver Seat® is all about.

- Half of all young passengers who die in car crashes are not buckled up. (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS))
- Safety experts recommend that youth under the age of 13 always ride in the back seat. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA))
- Riding with drivers ages 16 to 19 are 3X more likely to die in a crash than if riding with a driver aged 20 and older. (IIHS)

This program, Teens in the Driver Seat®, is turning things around and your school can be part of it.

For years, most driving safety programs have been pretty much the same. They’ve been put together by adults — parents, teachers, police officers and politicians...all telling you what you need to do. But this program is different. It is teens, just like you, talking to other teens about the top driving dangers. Don’t let any of your friends die or get seriously injured. Teens in the Driver Seat saves lives, and it can work to save the lives of your friends too.

- Driving at night/fatigue - help keep the driver awake and help be on the lookout for nighttime dangers.
- Speeding/racing - speak up for your safety.
- Distractions - don’t be a distraction to the driver and help out with other passengers, like younger siblings.
- Not wearing a seat belt - always buckle up and ride in the backseat.
- Alcohol/drugs - don’t get into a car with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.

**INTRODUCTION**

Too many young people are dying. Help us stop that.

**SO...WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Simple — young teens need to know what the dangers are and how to keep themselves safe. Most youth don’t know the dangers they face every time they get into a vehicle. Since they are not aware of the dangers, they don’t know how to avoid them. You can learn the facts and help spread the message in your family, your school, and your community, because the more we know and change behaviors, the safer we will all be.

**WHAT ARE THE RISKS YOU CAN LEARN ABOUT?**

- Driving at night/fatigue - help keep the driver awake and help be on the lookout for nighttime dangers.
- Speeding/racing - speak up for your safety.
- Distractions - don’t be a distraction to the driver and help out with other
DRIVING FACTORS

Understand the teen driver safety problem.

HELP THE DRIVER STAY AWAKE

• If the driver is having a hard time staying awake:
  • Talk to him or her
  • Turn on the radio and maybe even sing along with the music together
  • Recommend that the driver stop and walk around or get something to eat or drink
  • As it gets dark outside and gets harder to see:
    • Ask the driver if the headlights are on
    • Keep your eyes open and help the driver watch the road

SPEEDING/RACING – SPEAK UP FOR YOUR SAFETY

• The faster the vehicle is going, the harder it is to stop
• Watch for speed limit signs and let the driver know when the number changes
• Help the driver look for dangers on the road
• Ask questions about driving and how it’s done. This lets the driver know they are setting the example
• Know the law - reckless driving is against the law and is defined in a way that shows you really don’t care about the safety of people or property

DISTRACTIONS — like cell phones, texting and other teen passengers

• Don’t distract the driver
• For every additional teen that rides in a car, the possibility of a car crash increases. Remember that passengers in the car can be a distraction, including you. Help reduce the distractions for the driver by:

• Talk at a normal level inside the car
• Lower the volume on all portable game players, DVD players, and music players
• Serve as the designated texter for the driver

ALWAYS BUCKLE UP AND RIDE IN THE BACK SEAT

• One in three young passengers who dies in car crashes are not buckled up
• Make sure you sit in the back seat and wear your seat belt properly
• Remind everyone to buckle up
• Stay in your seat and buckled up at all times

ALCOHOL/DRUGS – DON’T RIDE WITH SOMEONE WHO IS DRINKING OR USING DRUGS

• If the driver has been drinking or has used drugs:
  • Refuse to ride with them
  • Call someone you trust to help
  • Walk, bike, or find a different way if your trip is short
• If you see a driver that should not drive:
  • Let a responsible adult know
  • Tell him or her to call a cab or find a ride
  • Ask him or her to wait until they are able to drive

Now that you know the facts, where do you go from here?
IDENTIFY THE TEAM

WHO SHOULD DRIVE THE PROGRAM AT OUR SCHOOL?
Anybody can. It can be the student council, a club, or a combination of ten to twelve representatives from several different groups. You could even create a new group altogether. This group can also exist outside of your school — like a city teen court or youth commission. Assume that everyone may want to help, even those students who are not currently involved in another program. You need all the messengers you can get, and it’s best to have many different kinds of messengers. Everyone has a peer group, no matter how small it may be. The more peer groups that you involve, the better chance you have to succeed.

CAN TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT BE A COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT?
Yes. Your school or student organization may have community service requirements. Teens in the Driver Seat could be just what you and your school need.

DO WE NEED TO WORK WITH AN ADULT?
An adult teacher/sponsor can help drive the program at your school and help with resources you might need. Some examples of a teacher/sponsor are a teacher, counselor, school nurse, student council sponsor, safety officer or any school administrator. Creating a formal Teens in the Driver Seat Team at your school with an adult sponsor can help make your program even more successful.

CAN WE WORK WITH OTHER SCHOOLS IN OUR COMMUNITY?
Yes! Schools in your area may already have an established program. If not, you can introduce the program to them and work together to deliver messages and hold community activities.

LET’S DO THIS! NOW WHAT?
Jumpstart your program with these free tools:

- **t-driver.com**, the Teens in the Driver Seat website, has lots of information, from teen stories to school highlights, and so much more
- **Free educational materials**, like wrist bands, key tags and banners to help spread the word can be reordered each school year, including **T-shirts** for your Teens in the Driver Seat team members
- **TV messages and radio spots** that you could ask your local stations to use on the air or play on your school’s closed-circuit station
- **Information** on teen driving statistics
- **The Teens in the Driver Seat activity tools and posters** for you to use in creative and new ways

In addition, we’re always available to assist you. Find contact information on the back page.
IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

Consider these ideas to help you spread the word.

• Announce your Teens in the Driver Seat program to your local news media and make a presentation to your city council to make them aware of the problem and what your team plans to do about it.
• Deliver safety messages at school events by hanging up your banner and having information to pass out. Find ready to insert messaging on t-driver.com.
• Have random seat belt checks in your school parking lot and give out a promo item to those wearing their seat belts.
• Place signs and posters around your school during a Safety Week.
• Count distracted drivers coming into a sports event and make announcements during half-time.
• Create a fun presentation for other schools in your district.
• Write about Teens in the Driver Seat in your school newspaper or yearbook. Articles can be found on t-driver.com.
• Highlight your team on your school’s website.
• Add a link to the Teens in the Driver Seat website on your personal social networking web page.
• Read a “tip of the day” on the PA system at your school promoting safety.
• Work with community organizations to help spread the message (Scouts, places of worship, clubs, etc.).

SEASONALLY THEMED IDEAS

• Football Season: Pass out cardboard fans at football games with the top five dangers listed on the back.
• Halloween: “You thought Halloween was scary!” Warn classmates about top driving dangers.
• Winter: Hang snowflakes up with safety messages printed or written on them.
• Valentine’s Day: Set up a booth to send candygrams or flowers to their crush and include a card with a catchy safety slogan, like “Don’t break my heart, ride smart.”
• St. Patrick’s Day: “Don’t rely on luck, buckle up.” List the top five driving dangers on shamrocks and post them around your school.
• Spring Break: Make large 3-D posters to place around the school reminding friends about Zero Tolerance and No Refusal laws.
• Eighth Grade Graduation: Kiss a grad goodbye — and give candy kisses to those moving onto high school with Teens in the Driver Seat safety messages attached.

Get more ideas at t-driver.com, on our social media pages or get creative and come up with your own ideas.

@teendriverseat #teendriving
By getting the right message to others, you can help stop the epidemic that kills more teens in this country than any other cause. But, it’s not a one-time effort.

It’s not enough to get the right message out — you have to get the message out time and time again so that your classmates are reminded about the dangers and what to do about them. New teens are learning to drive all the time in your community.

Plan activities for the rest of the school year. Hold regular meetings with your sponsor and team.

Stay on the lookout for monthly newsletters that are full of activity ideas, resources and current contests. The email will go to your teacher/sponsor. If team members would also like to receive the newsletter, let us know.

**CONNECT**

Text idrive to 95577 to get weekly safe driving text messages delivered to your phone.

**TIP**

Teens in the Driver Seat rewards successful and active schools through awards and contests. Watch t-driver.com for details.

This tragedy didn't become an epidemic overnight. We won't solve it overnight, either. The sooner you get started, the sooner you can make a difference.

**WHY DO WE COLLECT SURVEYS?**

Texas A&M Transportation Institute is a research organization, so we use the surveys to measure how we are doing by looking at student awareness and driving behaviors. We share this information with the schools and our sponsors, because inquiring minds want to know! And, if you are wondering if we are making a difference, the answer is an enthusiastic YES! We know that in the years Teens in the Driver Seat has been around, teens buckle up more (14%) and use their cell phones behind the wheel less (30%).
WAYS TO BE INVOLVED

Choose your own level of involvement.

TEEN OF THE MONTH
Are you actively involved in your team’s activities and a great safe driving activist? Tell us about it! Complete the application form on t-driver.com and you could be our next Teen of the Month!

SPONSTAR AWARD
The purpose of this award is to recognize the teacher/sponsors that make a difference to teens though their work with the Teens in the Driver Seat program. Nominate your teacher/sponsor in the spring for this recognition!

TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT CUP
Schools receive points for completed activities (some must be reported) and compete against other schools for the top prize of TDS Cup and CASH! Everything your team does has a point value. We keep track and post a leader board throughout the year. All activities must be reported by March 31 and teams must complete requirements to win 1st, 2nd, 3rd place, or Outstanding School.

ZERO CRAZY!
An activity that focuses on increasing seat belt use in the fall and decreasing electronic use behind the wheel in the spring. Schools sign up to participate, then are sent step-by-step instructions to keep them on track to complete the activity in nine weeks. There is a pre-observation, three weeks of activities, and a post-observation. Information is sent in and the school receives back a report on the habits they changed in their community, a gift card, and receive TDS Cup points!

TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT SUMMIT
The Summit is an annual event that showcases student leaders in bringing awareness about this problem to their peers, their families, and their community. Learn more about this epidemic and latest innovative solutions to combat it. Activities are available for teens, teachers, school administrators, families, law enforcement, safety practitioners, industry, and more. All are invited to attend this annual event, held before the end of the school year.

DRIVING THE MESSAGE VIDEO AND POSTER CONTEST
This is where you speak up, save a life, and cash in! Your winning videos and posters earn cash for your school!

It’s all about peer-to-peer. We know the best messaging comes from your own voice and that is what we are wanting to hear! Send us your best creations and we use them to help other teens spread the message about safe driving. The annual contest opens in the fall and all entries must be in our office in January. Any junior high or high school student may enter. Send as many entries as you want and you can work in teams or individually. Make sure you read the rules and don’t miss the deadline.

Cash prizes are sponsored by: 

State Farm®