

**SEGMENT 2**  
**DRIVER EDUCATION**  
**Risk Awareness**

**Fact Sheet 1      Why Should Young Drivers Be Concerned?**

- **Risk** is the chance of death, injury, damage, or loss.
- One out of every seven 16-year-old drivers will have a serious crash before his/her 17th birthday.
- Four out of five young drivers will be involved in a crash during the first three years of driving.
- For 16- and 17-year-old drivers, the risk for crash involvement is at a lifetime high during the first six months of unsupervised driving.
- For every mile driven, the average driver makes 200 observations, 40 decisions, and one mistake. Once every 500 miles, one of those mistakes leads to a near-collision.
- Research indicates that **errors due to inexperience**, rather than high speed and irresponsible behavior, account for the largest share of young driver crashes.
- The largest single category of error involves visual search.
- Each year approximately 90 young drivers in Michigan are involved in a fatal crash.
- Each year approximately 35,000 (or one of every six) 16- and 17-year-old drivers are involved in a property damage, injury, or fatal crash.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Identify and explain possible errors of inexperience.**

**How far-reaching is the impact when a young driver or passenger is killed in a crash?**

**What about the impact on a driver or passenger who survives a fatal crash?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- Other reasons for young driver errors:
  - Lack of attention to driving; the eyes are focused in the right direction but the mind is somewhere else.
  - Failure to adjust speed adequately for traffic, curves, and slick surfaces.
- Failure to recognize hazardous situations is the underlying error in most crashes.
- As the number of teen passengers increases, fatal crashes among 16- and 17-year-old drivers are more likely to involve a single vehicle, speeding, and driver error.
- Each year approximately 195 16- and 17-year-olds are involved in a fatal crash either as a driver, passenger, or pedestrian.

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**Fact Sheet 2      When Do Crashes Occur for Young Drivers?**

- 55% of all young driver fatal crashes occur in daylight.
- The most dangerous time of day for young driver fatal crashes is the three-hour period (2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) after school.
- 35% of young driver fatal crashes occur on Friday and Saturday.
- The months of June, July, and September account for one-third of all young driver fatal crashes.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Why is the “after school” time period the most dangerous for young driver fatal crashes? How can you reduce your risk when driving after school?**

**Why is 9:00 p.m. to Midnight another dangerous time period for young drivers? How can you reduce your risk when driving during this time?**

**Why is September a dangerous month for young driver fatal crashes? What can you do to reduce your risk?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- 30% of all young driver fatal crashes occur in the dark on unlit roads.
- 18% of young driver fatal crashes occur between 9:00 p.m. and Midnight.
- 10% of young driver fatal crashes occur between Midnight and 6:00 a.m.

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**Fact Sheet 3      Where Do Crashes Occur for Young Drivers?**

- 11% of young driver fatal crashes occur on gravel (non-paved) roads.
- 51% of young driver fatal crashes occur on county roads.
- 96% of all young driver fatal crashes occur on roadways with a speed limit of 55 MPH or less.
- 75% of young driver fatal crashes occur on sections of roadway where no traffic control devices are in effect.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Why are young driver fatal crashes on county roads so high? How can you reduce your risk when driving on county roads?**

**What sections of roadway do you consider most dangerous in the areas where you typically drive? How can you reduce your risk when driving in these areas?**

**Why are fatal crashes on interstate highways low for young drivers?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- 3.5% of young driver fatal crashes occur on interstate highways.
- 71% of young driver fatal crashes occur while driving a vehicle on a straight-away.
- 9% of young driver fatal crashes occur while driving on a curve.
- 6% of young driver fatal crashes occur while making a left turn.
- 15% of young driver fatal crashes occur on roadways with a speed limit of 35 MPH or less.
- 14% of young driver fatal crashes occur at stop signs.
- 10% of young driver fatal crashes occur on roadways where traffic control devices are in effect.

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**Fact Sheet 4      Young Drivers + Passengers = Increased Risk**

- The risk of fatal crash involvement for a 16-year-old driver increases 40% if one passenger is present, 86% if two passengers are present, and 182% with three or more passengers present. For 17-year-old drivers the comparable risk factors are 48% if one passenger is present, 158% if two passengers are present, and 207% with three or more passengers present.
- In approximately one-third of all fatal crashes involving young novice drivers, the novice driver is killed.
- In fatal crashes involving young novice drivers, approximately two-thirds of those killed are other passengers, other drivers or pedestrians, with occupants in the young driver's vehicle accounting for 64% of the fatalities.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**How do you reduce distraction while driving when you have peer passengers in your vehicle?**

**Being a passenger in a young driver's vehicle is more dangerous than being the driver. How do you reduce your risk when you are a passenger in a young driver's vehicle?**

**What have you discussed with your parents about limiting the number of passengers in your vehicle?**

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**Fact Sheet 5      What Type of Vehicle(s) Are Young Drivers Driving?**

- In fatal crashes involving young drivers, 41% of the vehicles driven are 10 years old or older.
- One year after licensure, only 35% of young drivers are driving the types of vehicles recommended for them – midsize or large passenger cars.
- Teenage vehicle owners are likely to drive more miles, take more risks, receive more traffic violations, and be involved in more crashes than those who do not own vehicles.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**If you drive an older vehicle, how can you ensure the vehicle is safe? What measures can you take to safely drive an older vehicle?**

**What types of vehicles do you drive? What safety features do your vehicles have (i.e., antilock brakes, air bags, stability control, etc.)?**

**Safe vehicle resources:**

**The Insurance Institute of Highway Safety (<http://www.iihs.org/ratings/default.aspx>) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (<http://www.safercar.gov/>) rate vehicles based on performance in crash tests.**

**Using the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's data or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's data, find out the crashworthiness of the vehicle you will be driving with your Level 2 license.**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- In fatal crashes involving young drivers, 9% of the vehicles driven are 15 years old or older.

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**Fact Sheet 6      What Types of Crashes Are Young Drivers Involved in?**

- 37% of young driver fatal crashes are single vehicle incidents, compared to 50% for all Michigan drivers.
- 63% of young driver fatal crashes involve two or more vehicles.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Why are there fewer single-vehicle fatal crashes involving young drivers?**

**Why are young drivers involved in very few rear-end fatal crashes?**

**Why are there more multi-vehicle versus single-vehicle fatal crashes involving young drivers?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- 19% of young driver fatal crashes are head-on with another vehicle.
- 4% of young driver fatal crashes are rear-end crashes.

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**Fact Sheet 7      What Are the Road and Weather Conditions When Fatal Crashes Occur Involving Young Drivers?**

- 84% of young driver fatal crashes occur during fair weather conditions.
- 74% of young driver fatal crashes occur on a dry road surface.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Why are majority of young driver fatal crashes on dry road surfaces during fair weather conditions?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- 9% of young driver fatal crashes occur in the rain.
- 6% of young driver fatal crashes occur in the snow.
- 1% of young driver fatal crashes occur in fog.
- 17% of young driver fatal crashes occur on wet roads.
- 4% of young driver fatal crashes occur on icy roads.

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**Fact Sheet 8      What Other Factors Contribute to Young Driver Fatal Crashes?  
(Gender, Safety Belt Usage, Alcohol Consumption)**

- In Michigan, 64% of the young drivers involved in fatal crashes were male drivers, while 36% were female drivers.
- In Michigan, 25% of all young drivers involved in fatal crashes were not using a safety belt.
- In Michigan, 9% of all young drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking alcohol, as compared to 19% for all drivers.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Why are 25% of the young drivers involved in fatal crashes not wearing their safety belts?**

**Why are there fewer alcohol-related fatal crashes involving young drivers?**

**Why are more young male drivers involved in fatal crashes than young female drivers?**

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**Fact Sheet 9      How Big a Factor Are Distractions?**

- Distractions cause young drivers to concentrate on things other than driving.
- Cell phone use impairs a driver's ability to handle the ever-changing driving environment, similar to a driver with a .08 Blood Alcohol Content.
- A young driver reading a text message or "texting" is even more impaired. This is why texting while driving is called "driving while intoxicated."
- Drivers who use cell phones while driving are four times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers who are not using cell phones.
- Brain power associated with driving decreases by 40% when a driver listens to someone talk, whether it is a passenger or the radio.
- Research reveals that young drivers' brains may not be fully developed until the age of 25.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**How many of you talk on a cell phone while driving?**

**How many of you send text messages while driving?**

**Do you believe that young drivers are more easily distracted than other drivers?**

**Do you believe that experienced drivers can multi-task better than you?**

**How does brain development affect your ability to handle distractions?**

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION**

- For young drivers, distractions are compounded by inexperience; a panicked reaction or overreaction is more common and more likely.
- A recent survey of Minnesota teens reported that 86% read text messages while driving, and 75% sent text messages while driving.
- The most recent survey of dangerous driver behavior reported that 73% of all drivers use a cell phone while driving.

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- A study released in April 2006 reported that some form of driver distraction, occurring within three seconds of the incident, contributed to nearly 80% of all crashes and 65% of near-crashes.

**Fact Sheet 9 (Continued) How Big a Factor Are Distractions?**

- 50% of rear-end crashes and 30% of all crashes can be prevented with an additional half second of reaction time.
- Driving while multi-tasking inhibits your ability to concentrate. Your lack of awareness may cause other drivers to drive more defensively.
- Multi-tasking while driving results in “inattention blindness” or the inability to recognize objects encountered in the driver’s field of vision.
- Cell phone use, text messaging and driving all require the same brain function.
- Research confirms that young drivers are less proficient at multi-tasking while driving compared to adults. One study reported that cell phone use while driving resulted in adults failing to identify hazardous events at a rate of 13%, while teens failed to identify at a rate of 53%.
- The prefrontal cortex (the front portion of the brain that controls judgment, decision-making, multi-tasking, planning, reasoning, and social skills) is not fully matured in young drivers, making them more susceptible to peer pressure.

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**Profile of a Michigan Fatal Crash Involving a Young Driver**

**Male driver**

**Level 2 license within past six months**

**Driving on a dry county road during daylight**

**Straight stretch of roadway without a traffic control device present**

**Peer passengers in the vehicle**

**Distractions present**

**Failure to recognize a hazardous situation**

**Multi-vehicle crash occurs**

**Passenger is killed**