



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Vermont Reminds Teen Drivers to “Keep Your Eyes on the Road; And Your Thumbs Off Your Keypad”

National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 17-24

For Immediate Release: Oct. 22, 2010
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BURLINGTON – Distracted driving comes in many forms, from texting and talking on a cell phone, to eating and playing with a radio, CD player, iPod, or MP3 device.

Eighteen percent of the more than 3,750 teenagers ages 15 through 19 who died in automobile crashes in 2008 were involved in some form of distracted driving, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Most teenage deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are preventable, with 48 percent of the fatalities related to accidents. Eleven of 28 Vermont deaths (ages 15-19) in 2008 were motor vehicle fatalities, the leading cause of death for that age group.

“Actions that are perfectly safe in the right context can be deadly when performed behind the wheel of a car,” said Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, MD. “Distracted driving has become a significant public health danger for all of us – especially for young people, but it’s easily solved.”

Nationally, one of every three teenage drivers have texted while driving, according to the Pew Research Center. Vermont was among 30 states that passed legislation outlawing texting while driving in 2010.

“The new law is designed to both educate and save lives,” said David Dill, Secretary of Vermont’s Agency of Transportation. “Teenagers are more likely to text while driving than any other age group. The new law allows us to work not only with police to curb texting as it happens, but also to work with schools and other youth organizations to help prevent texting and driving from happening in the first place.”

Awareness programs like National Teen Driver Safety Week are helping to educate both parents and teens, according to Education Commissioner Armando Vilaseca.

“The push to raise awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving among the students has been effective, and we should leverage that awareness to include messages about the dangers of distracted driving as well,” Vilaseca said.

For more information about teen driving safety, please visit www.nhtsa.gov; www.distraction.gov; or www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/teenbrief

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