Connecticut’s Graduated Driver Licensing Laws Earn A’s

The Report: Ten years after Connecticut’s graduated driving license (GDL) laws were adopted, the 2014 Report on Effectiveness of Connecticut’s Teen Driving Laws\(^1\) examined the impact of these requirements on teen driver safety.

The Result: The verdict is in. GDL laws are working in Connecticut.

Zero 16- or 17-year-old passenger deaths occurred during the 10-year period, and only one death occurred among 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

The Connecticut Division of Motor Vehicles, which issued the report, cites a 64-percent reduction in the deaths of 16- and 17-year-old drivers when comparing 5 years of crash data before and after the 2003 GDL laws were enacted.

The report indicated that some 16- and 17-year-olds are delaying getting their license until they turn 18 so that they can avoid the GDL laws. Even so, the number of 16- and 17-year olds driving remains fairly steady. The report notes that GDL violations are up slightly for 2014, compared to previous years.

Bottom Line: As GDL laws enter their teens, their impact on teen driver safety is powerful and positive.

What Works

A study by the Connecticut Children’s Medical Center\(^2\) shows that the State’s GDL laws are reducing fatalities and that the teen driving laws – not maturity – are behind the reductions, since they help limit exposure to hazardous situations.

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Study Sheds Light on Crashes among Newly Licensed Drivers

The Study: Researchers interviewed 16 year-olds in Connecticut who had a crash within 8 months of getting their licenses. Interviews were coupled with an examination of police reports to determine common contributing factors and crash types for novice drivers.

The Result: While behavior is paramount, crash types indicate infrastructure can also play a role.

Bottom Line: This Connecticut study showed that three quarters of crash-involved teenagers were at fault, and crashes primarily occurred when teen drivers:
1. Ran off the road,
2. Rear ended another vehicle, or
3. Collided with another vehicle that had the right-of-way.

Three factors generally contributed:
1. Speeding,
2. Failing to detect presence of another vehicle or traffic control, and
3. Sliding or losing control of the vehicle (with inclement weather often contributing).

What Works

Promising Infrastructure Interventions:
1. Roadway departure (rumble strips, guardrails).
2. Intersections (retroreflective signal backplates, one signal head per lane, reflective posts on stop signs).
3. Surface treatments (high friction surfaces, winter maintenance applications).
4. Speed limit reinforcement (speed displays, variable message signs).

Promising Behavior/Vehicle Interventions:
1. Adequate practice driving.
2. In-vehicle monitoring devices.
3. Electronic stability control.

Teen and Parent Know-How are Priorities in NIH Study

The Study: A naturalistic driving study followed 43 newly licensed teens for 18 months via instruments in their vehicles. The study used test track performance to monitor changes over time in driver performance measures. The study was sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and was conducted by Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI). The results were published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2014.

The Result: Most teen drivers essentially know how to drive safely, but choose not to.

The study showed that teens know the rules and follow them, using turn signals, matching speed, and checking blind spots, for instance, at least as well as adults. Even risky behaviors such as hard braking, speeding, swerving and “hitting the gas,” occur with nearly the same frequency for teens as for adult drivers – if an adult is in the car with the teen. When unsupervised, teen drivers demonstrated high-risk behaviors four to five times more frequently than adults did during VTTI’s adult naturalistic driving study.

Bottom Line: Results show that poor decisions, not lack of knowledge, push behavior risks. New teen drivers drive like adults when supervised, but choose to drive less safely when unsupervised.

What Works

Promising Behavior/Vehicle Interventions:
1. Maintain an authoritative presence when adults can’t be in the car, indicating the “rules of the house” must be as important as the “rules of the road.”
2. Use parent/teen “contracts” to help reinforce expectations.
3. Consider driver monitor systems, which help set and reinforce clear expectations and have the potential to reduce teen injury and fatality by as much as 80 percent.
4. Put teen drivers into the newest car in the household instead of the oldest. A VTTI study found that teen fatality rates could be reduced by one third nationwide through this one parental choice.
5. Reinforce levels of maturity with graduated driver licensing laws in place nationwide.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US

Teens earn surprising, and reassuring, A’s for general competence. They need back up (infrastructure improvements, supervision, “house rules,” GDL laws, maturity) to maintain that grade point average when it comes to reaping the benefits of what they (and we) know.
Computer operating systems undergo constant, evolutionary upgrades. It might be said that America’s mobility platform is in the midst of a revolutionary upgrade. As we enter the era of Mobility 2.0, we recognize that transportation is connectivity, a network that transmits access to work, to food, to healthcare, to education, to all the qualities of life. So perhaps it is oddly logical that, in an increasingly connected world, human beings find it ever more counterintuitive to disconnect, even for the sake of safe mobility, from the many technologies that fuel their natural inclination to stay in touch.

**Every Day Counts**

Technology is evolving to better connect society, and roadway safety needs to evolve with it. The fourth round (2017-2018) of the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA’s) Every Day Counts (EDC) program supports a variety of innovations that enhance safety, provide opportunity, and spur innovation while addressing the promise of a new era of mobility.

- **Community Connections** offers tools and strategies that have helped State and local agencies plan, design, and manage transportation spaces that promote health, safety, and connectivity.

- **Data Driven Safety Analysis (DDSA)** uses the latest scientific analysis to innovatively identify areas of concern and optimize the use of safety funding.

- **Using Data to Improve Traffic Incident Management (TIM)** supports the use of low-cost, often off-the-shelf technologies to make data collection simpler, expanding the amount and quality of data an agency can collect.\(^4\)

- **Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian (STEP)** leverages pedestrian safety best practices around the country to develop a central hub of expert advice.

**Road Weather Management – Weather-Savvy Roads**, integrates mobile observations and “Pathfinder” strategies to help agencies manage road systems, keeping travelers informed before and during adverse road weather conditions.

The **ultimate goal** of the next generation of transportation technology is to connect vehicles, people, and infrastructure. FHWA offers resources for transportation agencies preparing to meet their connectivity goals by deploying connected vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure technologies. Visit [https://www.its.dot.gov/cv_basics/index.htm](https://www.its.dot.gov/cv_basics/index.htm) to learn more.

**Getting Connecticut Involved**

Connecticut transportation safety stakeholders can access resources for each of the Every Day Counts initiatives, including training, technical assistance, webinars, literature, infographics, case studies and other tools. Several are listed on the following page and all can be accessed at [http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts).

Connecticut also provides their own Every Day Counts education. Connecticut’s LTAP center, run by the University of Connecticut, provides Safety Academy classes including STEP Training and DDSA Roundtable. Find out about these and other educational opportunities at: [http://www.t2center.uconn.edu/](http://www.t2center.uconn.edu/).

While safety is the clear mandate of Connecticut’s SHSP, it is worth remembering that smart safety choices can also improve the quality of communities and of opportunities offered to each citizen investor. Mobility 2.0 is all about safe connectivity, a concept at the core of the SHSP, but also at the very heart of life in CONNeCTicut.

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Connecting Modes

- The Capital Region Council of Governments sponsored the West Hartford Road Diet and Safety Study, which explored the potential to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on 1.8 miles of North Main Street from Bishops Corner to the West Hartford Center. [http://crcog.org/2016/07/11/west-hartford-road-diet-and-safety-study](http://crcog.org/2016/07/11/west-hartford-road-diet-and-safety-study)

- FHWA Road Diets Quarterly Newsletter: Connecticut participated in a Regional Road Diet Peer-to-Peer Exchange to collaborate on and discuss with other agencies the benefits, lessons learned, challenges, and solutions related to Road Diets. [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/fhwasa16033-flyer.cfm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/fhwasa16033-flyer.cfm)

- FHWA Office of Safety Road Diet Workshops: Upon request, FHWA offers a free one-day workshop that explores how agencies can use Road Diets to improve safety, operations, and liveability in their communities. [http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/fhwasa16033-flyer.cfm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/road_diets/resources/fhwasa16033-flyer.cfm)

Improving Predictability

- NHI National Traffic Incident Management Responder Training: Created by responders for responders, this National Highway Institute course provides a shared understanding of the requirements for safe, quick clearance of traffic incident scenes; prompt, reliable and open communication; and motorist and responder safeguards. [http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/training/course_search.aspx?course_no=133126](http://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/training/course_search.aspx?course_no=133126)

- The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) (in partnership with FHWA) Traffic Incident Management Training: IAFC delivers training programs developed by FHWA under the Second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP 2) geared at improving the safety of first responders at traffic incident scenes. [http://www.saferequest.org/](http://www.saferequest.org/)

- Traffic Incident Management Network: The TIM Network connects traffic incident management professionals – especially those from different disciplines – and provides a forum to discuss developing issues of national interest, keep stakeholders apprised of the latest industry information, and garner important input from practitioners. [http://timnetwork.org/](http://timnetwork.org/)

Connecting Jurisdictions

- FHWA Collaboration across the Road Weather Enterprise—The Pathfinder Project: The Pathfinder project was initiated to document best practices across agencies in disseminating consistent messages about the weather and its impact on the roads. [http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop16086/fhwahop16086.pdf](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop16086/fhwahop16086.pdf)

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SAFETY NEWS ROUND-UP

The CTDOT Highway Safety Office’s “Save a Life Tour” returned to 60 high schools for the 2016-2017 school year. In partnership with AT&T’s “It Can Wait” campaign, this distracted driving program has visited more than 200 high schools since its inception. [http://www.kramerintl.com/simulators/drunk-driving-simulator/distracted-driving-simulator/](http://www.kramerintl.com/simulators/drunk-driving-simulator/distracted-driving-simulator/)

The CTDOT Highway Safety Office has launched the “Choices Matter” impaired driving program, which will visit 45 high schools during the 2016-2017 school year. Chris Sandy, who caused a fatal crash after drinking when he was 22 years old, has made the program his mission and will talk directly with Connecticut students. [http://www.choicesmatterconnecticut.com/information.html](http://www.choicesmatterconnecticut.com/information.html)

On Aug. 31 at the Governor’s Highway Safety Association annual meeting, officials from CTDOT and the University of Connecticut’s Connecticut Transportation Safety Research Center (CTSRC) accepted the Peter K. O’Rourke Special Achievement Award in the Field of Highway Safety in recognition of CTDOT’s motor vehicle crash reporting system and CTSRC’s Connecticut Crash Data Repository. [http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20160919/NEWS01/160919934](http://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/20160919/NEWS01/160919934)
SAFETY NEWS ROUND-UP (Continued)


The Police Academy and the CTDOT Highway Safety Office provided training and certified 31 drug recognition experts (DREs). Connecticut will host an April 2017 training session, extending the opportunity for 12 to 16 more law enforcement officers. As of 2017, the Connecticut Transportation Safety Research Center has supplied 31 tablets to the DREs for electronic submission of each evaluation.

With a theme of “One Split Second,” submissions were collected for the 2017 DMV-Travelers Teen Safe Driving Video Contest. Since 2008, the contest has attracted over 3,000 participants from more than 100 high schools across Connecticut. Winning entries will be announced in late 2017, with cash prizes and deployment of the videos in AAA driving school classes Statewide. [http://www.ct.gov/dmv/cwp/view.asp?Q=585840&A=807](http://www.ct.gov/dmv/cwp/view.asp?Q=585840&A=807)

NEW RESOURCES TO USE & SHARE

**Reports/Publications**
- **Traffic Incident Management (TIM) Performance Measurement: On the Road to Success** - This resource provides an overview of an FHWA Focus State Initiative, which developed and tested consensus-based, multi-agency, or “program-level” performance measures for TIM. It also offers resources for getting started with TIM program-level performance measures. [http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop10009/tim_fsi.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop10009/tim_fsi.htm)
- **FHWA Public Roads Magazine “Creating Smarter Work Zones”** – Use this resource to learn about advances in high-tech tools that can improve safety and efficiency during roadwork. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/14marapr06.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/14marapr06.cfm)

**Videos/Images**
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Free Image Library** – Use this resource for royalty-free images that inform and enhance your pedestrian and bicycle communications tools. [https://www.pedbikeimages.org/index.cfm](https://www.pedbikeimages.org/index.cfm)
- **Bridging the Divide – Connecting People to Opportunity Video** – Consider this resource to illustrate how infrastructure improvements often enhance quality of life as well as safety. It also shows another way in which transportation represents connectivity. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh71j9MTpo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh71j9MTpo)

**Infographics**
- **FHWA DDSA Project Development Infographic** – This resource illustrates how DDSA helps target investments and save lives. [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/pdf/ddsa_project_development_engineers.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovation/everydaycounts/edc_4/pdf/ddsa_project_development_engineers.pdf)

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