

# NEW MEXICO INJURY ATTORNEY BLOG

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## Teen Driver Safety

A new school year has started and teens are headed back to class, sports practices and other various activities. While this is a time of exciting change, it can be a time of great risk for those teens who find themselves in the driver's seat. Automobile accidents are the number one cause of teen deaths in New Mexico and nationally, a teenage driver is killed every 6.5 minutes.

Teens face several risks when driving. Predominantly, it is their lack of driving experience that increases their risk of being in an automobile accident. Often, teens just don't have the intuitive driving skill that comes with experience. They can also underestimate the danger of certain situations or hazards while overestimating their own abilities and immortality. Then there is inattention that occurs naturally in teens and the even more dangerous distractions that bring upon themselves: unruly teenage passengers, food and drink and worst of all mobile phones and texting. Couple these dangers with the added dangers of nighttime driving, dangerous weather conditions, and frequent failure to use a seat-belt, and you arrive at a pretty hazardous driving scenario for both the teen driver and the rest of us.

Fortunately, the risks can be reduced. There are numerous resources available from New Mexico MVD for the reduction of teen driving risks beyond the mandatory driver's education programs and graduated license programs . These include numerous available defensive driving instruction, and driving workshops. Increased driving instruction, particularly in defensive driving techniques and emergency situations can boost a teen's experience level.

Despite all the available resources, the reality is that most teens will do the absolute minimum to get their license. This comes to the most important determinant of teen driver safety, parental role models, guidance and instruction.

Parents of teen drivers can actually help increase their child's safety behind the wheel by being a good role model. Parents should demonstrate safe driving techniques. Some of what teen learns about driving is learned through observation. Just as importantly, much of what a teen believes is acceptable driving behavior comes from observation of parents and others.

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Parents should spend as much time as possible as a passenger while their teen drives to spot dangers and provide input into their driving. In some cases, the parent might also be able to identify and correct some learned dangerous driving habits.

Driving is a serious responsibility with the potential for serious consequences. Fortunately, teen automobile accidents are preventable. With an increase in education, adherence to state regulations and parental involvement, teen drivers can be better equipped to face the risks that driving presents.

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