

# MOTORING

SPECIAL AUTOMOTIVE SUPPLEMENT

## Keeping teens safe behind the wheel

With the growing use of cell phones and text messaging, it's not surprising that risky and distracted driving are the main causes of teen motor vehicle accidents. A 2009 Pew survey estimates that 26 percent of all American teens have texted while driving, and 43 percent have talked on a cell phone while driving.

Today's teen drivers face an increasing number of risks and distractions, making safe driving habits more important than ever. At the same time, teen driving laws are evolving, and fewer public schools across the country can afford to offer drivers' education.

Many community organizations and even large businesses have stepped in to proactively help teens learn the importance of practicing safe driving skills. For example, UPS, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and UPS NASCAR driver David Ragan are partnering for the second consecutive year to present UPS Road Code, a comprehensive safe driving course,

based on UPS's own driver training programs, to help teach teens across the nation the importance of safe driving and defensive driving skills.

"When I'm on the race track, I'm surrounded by about 40 other cars while driving sometimes more than 150 mph. I can't afford any distractions," says Ragan, UPS Road Code spokesperson. "Defensive driving is a priority for me on and off the track, and I think there needs to be greater education for American teenagers on what it means to be a safe driver."

A teen's first priority while driving should be to pay attention to the highway. Some helpful tips for keeping their eyes on the road include:

- \* Give enough distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you to allow you a view of all your surroundings. A driver should be able to see the rear tires of the vehicle in front of you.

- \* Identify "stale" green lights — a light the driver

did not see turn green — and prepare to stop if it turns red before you reach it.

- \* Be observant and expect other drivers to do unpredictable things while driving around you, such as speeding and changing lanes.

- \* Use your signals, lights and horn to communicate with other drivers on the road.

- \* Establish cushion space by delaying your start from an intersection by three seconds after the vehicle in front of you has moved.

- \* Check your mirrors every five to eight seconds because hazards that can cause an accident aren't always in front of you.

Learning the risks and consequences of driving, plus hands-on experience behind the wheel, is essential to improve driving among teens. Drivers' education, graduated licensing systems and teen-driving programs provide youth important information and the opportunity to practice safe driving.



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