

Enhancements to the Graduated Licencing System for Teenage/New Drivers

The Issue:

Ontario research shows that new teenage drivers are almost three times more likely to be involved in a fatal or serious collision when they are carrying teenage passengers. In fact, research shows the more teenage passengers, the higher the risk. (<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/gradu/index.html> accessed February 4, 2008)

In the Grey Bruce Health Unit region deaths for age category 15 to 19 (4 years of collapsed data 2000 to 2003) totaled 33 deaths of which 26 were categorized as being from *motor vehicle accidents* (79%). The average is 6 to 7 deaths per year. Comparatively, for the same timeframe and age range provincially there were a total of 1258 deaths of which 389 were caused by MVAs (31%). Therefore, while Motor Vehicle accidents are consistently the leading cause of death in this age group both provincially and locally, it constitutes a much higher percentage of the deaths in Grey Bruce. (Source: Ministry of Health Promotion. HELPS Vital Statistics 2000-2003 Data Release, April 2007)

The combined average for Grey and Bruce counties is 7 teenage deaths per year related to Motor Vehicle accidents.

An advocacy effort has been initiated by a family whose son was in the fatal crash that killed 5 teens from Thornbury, Ontario January 19th, 2007. The Perry family is interested in advancing the idea that while the graduated licensing system has been helpful, it should be more restrictive regarding the carrying of teenage passengers. They are suggesting that the current restriction on carrying passengers that exists for nighttime driving should apply 24 hours each day for the first year of driving.

The Question: Would the Town of the Blue Mountains support this effort by writing a letter to the appropriate policy makers regarding these suggested changes?

Background

- √ In January 2007 five promising young men from Thornbury died while driving home from school.
- √ The causes of this tragedy were identified as excessive speed and an inexperienced driver.
- √ In the United States the fatality rate for drivers age 16 to 19 years, based on miles driven, is four times that of drivers age 25 to 69 years
- √ Teens tend to underestimate the risk of crashes in hazardous situations and to overestimate their ability to avoid identified threats (Arnett, 2002; Deery, 1999)

- √ Current data on crashes involving 16-year-old drivers shows that having multiple teenage passengers in the vehicle is twice as likely to cause a fatal crash as alcohol-impaired driving (<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/gradu/index.html> accessed Feb 11,2008)
- √ A 1998 study of police-reported crashes in Ontario found that carrying one teenage passenger almost doubled the fatal crash risk of teen drivers compared to driving alone. The risk was five times higher when two or more teenagers were in the car. (<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/gradu/index.html> accessed February 11, 2008)
- √ “skill deficiencies, such as inexperience and reacting too slowly, as well as risky driving behaviours and conditions, such as speed and distractions in the vehicle, contribute to collisions involving teens.”The Traffic Injury Research Foundation report Reducing the Crash Risk for Young Drivers report June 2006 pg 20
- √ “A main finding was a spike in crashes during morning and afternoon school commute times. This is when about 30 percent of the weekday crashes of 16 and 17 year-olds occurred during the school year. Fourteen percent occurred from 6:30 to 7:30 a.m., and 17 percent more occurred between 2:00 p.m. and 3 p.m. Two percent of the crashes occurred from midnight to 6:30 a.m. and 67 percent occurred at other times.” Status Report, Vol 41, No. 10, December, 19, 2006

Recommendation/Position

A. Family’s Recommendations on G2 Licensing

1. That the government consider extending the number of passengers restricted to apply 24 hours per day versus the current time restriction of midnight to 5 a.m. Simply stated, **G2 drivers 19 or under can carry one passenger aged 19 or under, excluding immediate family.**
2. We further recommend that the restriction on multiple passengers in the vehicle age 19 or under apply for a full year instead of the current six months.
3. After the first year, and until the G2 driver earns a full G license or turns 20, they can carry only three passengers aged 19 or under.

Action requested:

That the Town of The Blue Mountains approve the drafting of a letter to the Premier of Ontario and to the Minister of Transportation in support of the changes to the Ontario Graduated Licensing system, as outlined above.