

press release

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Parents and teen drivers dangerously disconnected

New State Farm® survey reveals an alarming gap between parents' and teens' views on driver licensing laws



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Bloomington, Ill., (Sept. 16, 2013) /PRNewswire/— Parents of teen drivers believe teens are obeying the letter of the law when it comes to graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws. As it turns out, what parents think – or hope – and what teens report actually doing don't match up according to a new survey conducted by State Farm. As it turns out, what parents think – or hope – and what teens report actually doing don't match up according to a new survey conducted by State Farm.

GDL laws are an experience-based method for beginning drivers in which driving privileges are introduced in phases. States began enacting GDL laws in the mid 1990's. The objective of GDL is to keep teens out of high-risk driving situations while permitting them to gain on-road experience in low-risk environments.

In June, State Farm surveyed a sample of 500 parents of teen drivers and an independent sample of 500 teen drivers, asking for their take on parental monitoring and graduated driver licensing laws—if teens follow the laws and the reasons why they do so.

Key survey findings include:

Parents overestimate how much teens obey two key provisions of GDL laws:

- Nighttime driving – 69 percent of parents believe their teen driver almost always follows restrictions while less than half (48 percent) of teens admit to almost always following this law.
- Passenger restrictions – 70 percent of parents believe their teen driver almost always obeys this life-saving statute while only 43 percent of teens state they almost always follow this restriction.

Teens and Parents have different beliefs about why teens do or do not obey GDL laws:

- Peer pressure vs. the police: Parents listed peer pressure as the most likely reason teens do not follow GDL laws (34 percent), whereas teens listed thinking police will not catch them as the most likely reason (32 percent).
- Safety first: Parents were significantly more likely than teens to list “safety” as the most important reason to follow GDL laws (89 percent vs. 51 percent, respectively).

Parents were significantly more likely to report they almost always monitor if their teens obey the GDL laws, but teens disagreed:

- Parents were significantly more likely than teens to state teens will obey the driving restrictions due to parental monitoring (87 percent vs. 56 percent, respectively).
- For nighttime restrictions, 66 percent of parents said they almost always monitor if their teen obeys the restriction while only 32 percent of teens stated their parents almost always monitor their adherence to that law.
- For passenger restrictions, 65 percent of parents said they almost always monitor their teens and only 27 percent of teens state their parents almost always monitor their adherence to the law.

“GDL laws are effective tools in reducing the crash risk of new drivers,” said **Chris Mullen**, Director of Technology Research at State Farm. “Passenger and nighttime restrictions are essential to any successful GDL law. It is concerning to see a majority of teens admit not adhering to these laws; but perhaps more concerning to learn some parents may be unaware of their teen’s behaviors. We know through past research, parental involvement is key to keeping teens safe on our roadways.”

Parents and Teens agree texting while driving is unsafe:

Seventy-two percent of teens stated they almost always obey texting ban laws, substantially higher than any other GDL provision. Though significantly more parents think their teens almost always obey this law (82 percent), both teens and parents perceive this GDL provision as the most widely obeyed.

“Over the past two decades, some form of GDL has been passed in every state and teen crash fatalities have dropped substantially, but more still needs to be done to save lives,” said Kendell Poole, Chairman, Governors Highway Safety Association. “Parents play a key role in enforcing and monitoring GDL laws and helping teens become safe drivers. Parents should not rely solely on GDL to instill good driving habits; they have to step up as well.”

“My brother was in a car crash as a teen and was saved by his seat belt. Ever since then, my parents and I have known how important being a safe driver and following the GDL laws are to keeping me safe on the road,” said Arkansas native Raygan Sylvester, 17. “That’s why at school and on social media, I make it a priority to spread the word about safe driving.”

For years, State Farm, along with other safety advocates, has worked to protect teens on our roadways knowing the number one killer of teens is car crashes. “Through programs like our Celebrate My Drive® and our continued work towards stronger laws, enforcement, education, and awareness, we are using the correct comprehensive approach to save lives,” Mullen shared.

About the Survey

An online survey was conducted through the State Farm Center for Consumer Feedback from June 10 – 28, 2013 with a sample balanced by gender and driver licensing status (learner’s permit or driver’s license). 500 US parents of a 14-17 year-old with a learner’s permit or driver’s license (after data quality screening, the final sample was 487) and 500 US teens ages 14-17 (after data quality screening, the final sample was 482) responded to the survey. For more information please contact Amanda Draxton, 612.210.7409.

About State Farm

State Farm and its affiliates are the largest provider of **car insurance** in the U.S. and is a leading insurer in Canada. In addition to providing **auto insurance quotes**, their 18,000 agents and more than 65,000 employees serve 81 million policies and accounts – more than 79 million auto, home, life and health policies in the United States and Canada, and nearly 2 million bank accounts. **Commercial auto insurance**, along with coverage for renters, business owners, boats and motorcycles, is also available. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company is the parent of the State Farm family of companies. State Farm is ranked No. 44 on the Fortune 500 list of largest companies. For more information, please visit <http://www.statefarm.com> or in Canada <http://www.statefarm.ca>.

For more information on Teen Driver Safety programs at State Farm:

Celebrate My Drive

Celebrate My Drive is a different approach to a leading public health risk. Car crashes are the number one killer of teens, and a teen’s first year on the road is the most dangerous. Using research as a guide, **State Farm®** is approaching teen driver safety, a winnable public health battle, by engaging teens while they learn to drive in a supportive and positive way. It’s a community celebration of safe driving habits emphasizing the benefits of safe choices as teens celebrate the freedom that comes with getting a drivers’ license. Learn more about the initiative at www.celebratemydrive.com.

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