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SAFETY ARTICLE



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Teen Risky Driving Habits Include Text Messaging Behind the Wheel

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AAA, *Seventeen* magazine survey reveals speeding, phone calls common.

An alarmingly high number of teen drivers are engaging in some very risky behavior while they are driving including sending and reading text messages, according to new survey research by AAA and *Seventeen* magazine.

The survey, featured in *Seventeen* magazine's August issue, on newsstands today, shows that 61 percent of teens admit to risky driving habits. Of that 61 percent, 46 percent say that they text message when driving and 51 percent talk on cell phones while driving. The research, conducted in April, was a survey of more than 1,000 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

"Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of teens claiming more than 6,000 15- to 20-year-olds each year," said William Van Tassel, PhD, manager, AAA Driver Training. "Inexperience behind the wheel coupled with poor decision-making ability make it even more important for teens to stay focused when driving. Their attention should not be divided among phones, friends and the road."

Other teens in the vehicle can be a major distraction for teen drivers, and driver distraction is a factor in 25-50 percent of all crashes. Yet, 58 percent of teen respondents said that they drive with their friends in the car.

The research also reveals that 40 percent of teens exceed the speed limit by 10 miles per hour or more while driving, and 11 percent of teens admit to drinking or using other drugs before getting behind the wheel.

"Teens love to text, talk on their cell phones and hang out with their friends," said *Seventeen* Editor-in-Chief Ann Shoket. "But when you mix those social activities with young, inexperienced drivers, the results are dangerous and in many cases fatal. As the country's largest teen magazine, we want to educate teens about reckless behavior behind the wheel and help them understand the scary consequences."

"Novice young drivers need experience to gain the proficiency that will help to keep them safe on the road," said Van Tassel. "It's critical for teens to drive in the safest environment for at least the first six months of unsupervised driving."

Making the driving experience safer for teens would include ensuring that they drive during daylight hours, on familiar roads and without teen passengers. Parents can be positive role models by exhibiting good driving skills and behavior such as obeying speed limits, being courteous to other drivers, and avoiding the use of electronic devices while driving.

Parents should also discuss teen car crashes and how to prevent them, according to AAA. Conversations with teens can begin with topics that parents are already familiar with, such as the importance of wearing a seat belt, and move into the hazards of driving at night, while on a cell phone, or with teen passengers. Entering into a

parent-teen driving agreement can be a helpful way to start the dialogue.

For more information on parent-teen driving agreements or on keeping teens safer on the road, log on to www.AAA.com/publicaffairs. To find a driving school near you, or to find out more about driving courses, go to www.AAA.com.

Seventeen reaches more than 13 million readers every month and is today's largest selling teen beauty and fashion magazine. *Seventeen* is published by Hearst Magazines, a unit of Hearst Corporation (www.hearst.com) and one of the world's largest publishers of monthly magazines, with a total of 19 U.S. titles and nearly 200 international editions. Hearst Magazines reaches more adults in the U.S. than any other publisher of monthly magazines (73.4 million according to MRI, fall 2006). The company also publishes 19 magazines in the United Kingdom through its wholly owned subsidiary, The National Magazine Company Limited.

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