



MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Young Driver Safety

Maine Crash Facts:

- About 17,000 16 and 17 year olds have driver's licenses in Maine.
- One out of five 16 and 17 year old drivers will be involved in a crash this year, more than four times greater than the average rate for all drivers.
- Young drivers (aged 16-24) are involved in nearly 40% of all crashes.
- 16-24 year olds represent only about 10% of Maine's population, but they account for a quarter of Maine hospitalizations due to motor vehicle crashes.

From 2002 through 2004:

- Maine teens (age 16 to 19) were involved in nearly 23,000 crashes that resulted in 124 fatalities (more than 20% of all fatalities).
- Illegal or Unsafe Speed was a factor in nearly half of the crash fatalities involving teenage drivers. (4,800 crashes; 60 fatalities).
- Other leading crash factors:
 - Inattention or Distraction a factor in 7,100 crashes that resulted in 20 fatalities.
 - Failure to Yield the Right of Way a factor in more than 2,600 crashes and 8 fatalities.

16-24 year olds are two and a half times more likely to be hospitalized for a motor vehicle crash than other Maine residents. **The MaineDOT urges parents and young drivers to understand that young drivers are at great risk.** One in 5 young drivers crashes each year.

- Speed is the deadliest young driver crash factor. **More than half** of the young driver fatal crashes are speed related – so keep your speed down.
- 30% of young driver crashes are due to inattention or distraction – pay full attention to the driving task. Conditions ahead can change very quickly.
- Between 1998 and 2001, motor vehicle crashes resulted in \$23.6 million in hospital charges for this age group.
- Young drivers are six times as likely as adults to crash due to fatigue. Make sure your teen is well rested before getting behind the wheel.



- Summer means fun times, but remember, alcohol and driving don't mix. In Maine, 270 crashes a year involving alcohol or drug use occur to drivers aged 16-20. In the last 10 years, 81 people have died in underage crashes. Alcohol consumption for this age group is not only illegal, but can be deadly.

Young drivers are four times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than drivers over age 30. From 1998 through 2002, two-thirds of the 16-24 year olds killed in a car crash were not wearing seat belts. It is a documented fact that seatbelts save lives.

- Make sure you and all vehicle occupants wear their seatbelts.
- When driving, Be a Road Model. Parents can show their children what it means to be a safe driver and young drivers can also be a model for their friends.
- Even after your child gets his or her license, take the initiative and occasionally go out for a ride, letting your licensed teen drive. Do you have any tips or pointers to share?
- The time between midnight and 3 AM is the deadliest for Maine drivers. Avoid allowing your children drive during these times.

Other Facts:

- Unsafe or illegal speed is much more frequently a factor in young driver crashes than for older drivers. 16-17 year olds involved in crashes are 8 times more likely to be traveling at excessive speed than involved drivers over 25 years old.
- 18 to 19 year olds are 5 times more likely to be involved in a fatigue-related crash than drivers 25 and older.
- Crashes where the 18-24 year old driver was under the influence of alcohol or drugs is about 3 times that of drivers 25 years and older and underage drinking and driving is a concern.
- Young drivers are involved 35% more frequently in Run-Off the Road crashes than adults.
- (Often caused by a mix of excessive speed, driver inattention and inexperience.)
- Young drivers are 4 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than drivers over 30.
- For 16 to 20 year old drivers, inexperience leads to crashes 10 times more often than it does for older drivers. (17% for 16-20 year olds, 1.7% for those 21 and older.)
- Nationwide in 2002, two thirds of the 16-20 year olds killed were not wearing seat belts (according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).



Parents:

**You can show that you care (about your child's health and safety) by talking about safe driving to your kids and being a positive role model when you're behind the wheel:
When you're driving-Be a Road Model.**

- (No matter what the child's age...they learn more from you than you think!) Talk about the safe practices you are following.
- After they get their license, occasionally go out with them-and let them drive! (Any friendly pointers you need to share?)
- If roads are snowy or icy, and your teen has no slippery road driving experience, have your teen take the school bus instead of driving. It may momentarily hurt their pride, but it also may keep them alive!
- Have them come home at a reasonable time at night (avoiding deadly late night hours on the road). From 2002 through 2004, Maine teen drivers were involved in more than 2,200 crashes between the hours of 10 pm and 3 am. These crashes resulted in 34 fatalities and 1,200 injuries.

Reminders For Young Drivers:

- Driving demands your full attention. Changing the CD, using a cell phone or checking out what is going on at the side of the road may only take 2 seconds, but at 50 miles per hour, you will have traveled 150 feet. A lot can change in that short amount of time and that much distance.
- Keep scanning the road ahead and to the side for changes in road, traffic and other conditions.
- Be prepared to take safe, evasive actions that require quick reactions.
- Adjust driving speed to conditions, but never above the posted speed limit. When roads are snow or ice covered, rule number 1 is drive slowly. Also maintain a safe following distance it takes a long distance to bring a vehicle to a stop when roads are slick. Even if you have 4-wheel drive, it may help you to get going – BUT your stopping distance is the same as 2 wheel drive vehicles.
- The biggest distraction in the car may be your friends. Remember, you are responsible for the safety of everyone in the car. Save the fun and horseplay for after you get where you're going.

Be A Road Model...drive with the attitude that staying crash-free is a priority and always wear your seat belt.

- Drive within your capabilities---Know your limitations
- Always keep safety in mind (Do not take chances)
- Keep your vehicle under control:
- Maintain a safe speed
- Slow down prior to curves, turns and down hills

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- Winter roads can be very slippery, and getting into a skid means loss of steering and brake control. Drive slowly so you can make gradual stops and turns and maintain full traction.
- Watch what other vehicles are doing (and be prepared to react to unexpected actions.)

Here are some key traffic safety situations:

Following another vehicle:

- Maintain at least a 3 second gap between you and the vehicle ahead
- Longer in poor weather or when visibility ahead is limited.

Making a left turn:

- Do not cross the centerline until it is safe to do so
- Keep your wheels straight until you go into the turn
- Make sure oncoming traffic in all lanes is clear
- Watch for pedestrians and bicyclists

Driving across a stop sign-controlled intersection: Look left, then right, then left again before proceeding. (Watch for pedestrians who may also be crossing).

Snow banks can block your view of traffic. Use extreme care when pulling out-making sure you can see and be seen.

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- Snow and ice covered roads can be very treacherous. If there is snow or ice on the pavement:
 - **Slow down.** Be especially careful when approaching curves, intersections, or any stopped or slowing traffic ahead.
 - Allow adequate stopping distance to prevent skidding. You may be able to react faster than an older driver, but your vehicle takes the same amount of distance to stop and it takes a much longer distance to stop in snowy or icy conditions. Allow an extra cushion. Four-wheel drive does not help you stop quicker.
 - Make sure you have plenty of windshield washer fluid, and keep an extra supply in your vehicle.
 - Maybe taking the school bus today isn't cool, but being able to drive tomorrow is.
 - Ride **ONLY** with friends that drive responsibly.
 - Always wear your seatbelt **and** make sure everyone else in your car buckles up, too. (It's the law!)

As a new driver, you may feel experienced after being licensed a month or two ... but Police Crash Reports show a high rate of inexperience for young drivers. Make crash avoidance a top priority when you're behind the wheel.

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(Charts showing estimated relative rates of crashes and fatalities by age are on the next page.)

