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Iowa teens log fewer fatal crashes

CHAD NATION , Staff Writer

A recent study has ranked Iowa at number 38 when it comes to deaths among young drivers ages 16 to 20-years-old.

The study, conducted by the traffic safety advocacy group called End Needless Death on Our Roadways and the National Safety Council, ranked the deadliest states in the country for youth-related driving fatalities.

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The list is based on the percent of young drivers involved in fatal crashes adjusted by each state's 16- to 20-year-old driving population.

Iowa recorded 59 teen auto deaths per 100,000 registered teen drivers. Only Nebraska, at 58, and Illinois, with 55, ranked better in the Midwest.

According to the NSC, nationwide young drivers make up 6 percent of the driving population yet they are involved in nearly 20 percent of all fatal motor vehicle crashes.

In the last three months, two Pottawattamie drivers in this age group have been involved in fatal accidents.

A Council Bluffs man died in a single-vehicle collision on June 12, southeast of Crescent. Jonathan Fredriksen, 20, was southbound on Sandy Loop, west of 145th Street, in his 1993 Ford Explorer when it veered off the road and struck a tree.

Fredriksen was transported to Nebraska Medical Center by Life Net and pronounced dead at the hospital.

A single-vehicle accident north of Carson on Aug. 7, claimed the life of an Oakland man.

Jason Hagen, 18, was traveling northbound on 400th Street and lost control of the vehicle while going around a curve, causing the vehicle to roll.

Hagen was pronounced dead at the scene.

To curtail young driver deaths, the study recommends that states adopt certain guidelines for young drivers, including restrictions on driver's licenses until the age of 18.

Results of a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety on death rates between 1975 and 1996 show that the overall fatality rate for all drivers during that time dropped from 15 to 12 for each 100,000 licensed drivers, while the rate for 17- to 19-year-olds dropped from 27 to 25 per 100,000.

At the same time, the fatality rate for 16-year-old drivers, which is 15 times that for 20 to 24-year-olds, climbed from 19 to 35, making them the most likely to die in a collision.

Iowa adopted Graduated Driver's Licenses in 1999. The law created a three tier licensing system for young drivers.

According to a study conducted by Scott Falb of the Iowa Department of Transportation in 2004, the system has reduced the number of crashes involving 16-year-old drivers every year since 1998.

The NSC offers the following tips for young drivers to stay safe.

Take control as a passenger as well as a driver. Encourage your friends to use good judgment. Don't ride with drivers that take dangerous risks.

You are the only one who controls your behavior. You can't control driving conditions like weather, light, the road, traffic, or other drivers, but you can control how you prepare for and react to them.

Consider consequences. You are responsible for the choices you make. When you make a decision, remember that you are the one who will face the consequences.

When your friends pressure you, concentrate on driving. Your friends will most likely stop pressuring you once they see that you are not responding.

Call for a ride for your friends when they are acting unruly in your car or if in a situation involving alcohol or drugs.

Practice. Get as much supervised driving as possible as you work towards your full license.

For parents of teen drivers, the following tips will help to encourage good driving behavior in their children.

Set a good example. Reinforce good driving behaviors by using them.

Get involved. Teach good driving behaviors. Supervise your teen's driving and impose restrictions on where and when they drive.

Practice. Let your teen drive when you're in the car together. Let them get their driving practice with you, not their friends.

Talk to your teen about peer pressure, underage drinking and drug use.



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