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The Free Lance-Star

Deadly D.C.

D.C. tops all for teen-driver related fatalities.   

Date published: **8/6/2005**

Deadly D.C.

Teen drivers, city streets a bad mix

P OP QUIZ: Which Middle Atlantic jurisdiction has the highest number of teen-driver-related fatalities in the nation? That's right: the relatively tiny District of Columbia, home to a handful of "freeways," no rural roads, and the only stringent driver cell-phone-use rules in the region.

A report released by a traffic safety group called End Needless Death on Our Roadways (END) and the National Safety Council ranked the 50 states and D.C. on driver-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 teen drivers. The District came out on top, with 127 deaths per 100,000 drivers, a rate far above second-place North Carolina with 104 fatalities. Virginia and Maryland ranked below average, with 60 teen-driver related deaths each.

Drivers between the ages of 16 and 20 make up only 6 percent of the driving population, but they are involved in 20 percent of all fatal motor-vehicle crashes, asserts END. The primary culprits? Belts, booze, and speed.

Seatbelt use can prevent fatalities, but teens, all too often, fail to use the device, especially when their parents aren't present, notes John Pastuovic, executive director of END. It's just not cool. Also, impaired driving caused by alcohol or drug use is a factor in many fatalities, as is tromping the accelerator.

D.C.'s high rating, one suspects, could stem from several factors: The relatively small pool of teen drivers would sharply affect the statistics, and drivers coming into the city from surrounding areas to party could be boosting the total.

Regardless, END has this prescription: increased parental involvement, graduated licenses, restrictions on nighttime driving, and tough, no-nonsense responses to any drug- or alcohol-related offenses by teens.

Virginia is taking this medicine already, cracking down on minors who drink and drive and issuing provisional licenses that establish curfew and passenger limits for new drivers. (The failure of some teen drivers to abide

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by these restrictions has caused horrible tragedy hereabouts, especially in Stafford County.) Parents can join in the fight against teen-driver-related fatalities by enforcing curfew and passenger limits, restricting driving on high-risk days, and working to help their kids recognize and avoid risky behavior.

Handing a child the car keys is one of the scariest moments in a parent's life. "Buckle up. No booze. Slow down." Those are smart additions to "Goodbye." After that? Fervent prayer doesn't hurt.

Date published: **8/6/2005**



Local News Updates:

- **Virginia's Dog Laws**
(Monday, 08:59, WFLS News)
- **Cowan To Open Today**
(Monday, 08:44, WFLS News)
- **Dispute leads to shooting**
(Monday, 01:07, The Free Lance-Star)
- **Guard, police prepare**
(Monday, 01:07, The Free Lance-Star)
- **City warns ATV riders**
(Monday, 01:07, The Free Lance-Star)

AP News Updates:

- **Weather Forces NASA to Delay Landing**
- **ABC News Anchor Peter Jennings Dies at 67**
- **Iran Resumes Uranium Conversion Methods**
- **3 London Bombing Suspects Appear in Court**
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