

RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

Parental involvement needed to keep Nevada teen drivers safe on the road

Cory Farley / Streetbeat
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There's not much good news for parents in a study of teenage drivers released last week: Nevada ranked sixth in the nation in the incidence of fatal crashes involving young people ages 16 to 20, and aren't you tired of running with Mississippi and Louisiana in things like this?

The research, done by the National Safety Council and a physician-led group called End Needless Death On Our Roadways, found that Nevada had 94.5 fatal wrecks involving young drivers per 100,000 drivers in that age group. The hands-down loser was the District of Columbia with 127, but our ranking was far higher than the national average of 68.2. Nationally, drivers ages 16 to 20 make up 6 percent of the population but have about 20 percent of the fatal accidents.

State laws have some effect on teen safety, said John Ulczycki of the National Safety Council, but the most important factor is parental involvement.

"Youth-related driving fatalities are an epidemic," said Dr. Thomas Esposito of End Needless Death On Our Roadways.

Esposito said the high rate of teen deaths occurs because "young motorists are not given proper guidance (and) participate in unsafe behavior." Teens who survive the first year of driving generally have a lower risk thereafter.

State-imposed restrictions on young drivers have brought marked improvements, but the Nevada Legislature and a few others have been reluctant to step in. Esposito's group has written "A Prescription for Teen Driver Safety" it's distributing nationally. It's available at www.endneedlessdeath.org

Some highlights:

- * Drivers younger than 18 should get 30 to 50 hours of behind-the-wheel training, at least 10 of them at night.
- * Even after licensing, they shouldn't drive at night without a licensed adult in the car.
- * Any alcohol-related violation, including use of a fake ID, should result in denial of a license until age 21.

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In road news, Sparks commuters can expect closures on Baring Boulevard on Tuesday for slurry sealing. Eastbound lanes will be blocked from

7 a.m. through mid-day, westbound lanes from 9 a.m. until late afternoon.

Slurry sealing is also planned for other areas through the week. The schedule isn't firm, but includes:

- * Residential areas north of McCarran Boulevard and east of Pyramid Way.
- * Probasco Way from Prater Way to Queen Way.
- * Fourth Street from Victorian Avenue to the end.
- * Double R Boulevard from South Meadows Parkway to Damonte Ranch.
- * Neil Road from Peckham to Moana.
- * Smithridge between McCarran and Peckham.
- * Longley Lane from Virginia Street to McCarran.

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