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Keeping Teens Safe Behind The Wheel



14-year old Perry Waters are taking the road test for his learner's permit.

Before taking to the road, Arkansas State Police driver's license examiner Ann Baker makes sure he's familiar with all the signals.

Baker says, "We really try to emphasize with them all things safety because we want those kids to be able to go home to their parents."

When it comes to teen drivers like Perry, paying attention to the road and cutting down on distractions makes the difference between life and death.

According to a new report by the physician-led traffic safety group called End Needless Death on Roadways (END) and the National Safety Council, the youngest drivers make up one out of five motor vehicle fatalities in the country.

The report also ranked Arkansas as 22nd on the list of youth-related driving fatalities. Twenty-one percent of the state's traffic fatalities involve at least 16 to 20 year old driver.

Baker says, "It doesn't take but a second for an accident to happen." She adds a lot of that has to do with distractions like cell phones, music and sometimes even other drivers.

Teen driver Perry Waters says, "I think that it is true for some teen drivers, but I think that some teens are very good drivers and can be as good as someone who is very experienced."

Perry says he always pays attention to his surroundings and follows the rules of the road. Things his mother taught him. His mom, Bobbie Waters, says, "We've talked to Perry to make sure he is cautious and that he always thinks twice about entering into an intersection."

As he parks his vehicle, Perry gets the stamp of approval from Baker and passes his road test.

Baker says about a fourth of all young drivers don't pass their test the first time. She says she tries to impress upon them driving is a privilege, one they can hopefully enjoy for a long time.

Perry's mom, Bobbie says she was hesitant at first to



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*Elder Law Practice
H. Todd Whatley*

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allow her son to get his learner's permit at 14. But she now feels that will give him two more years experience of having someone else in the car while he drives.

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The traffic-safety advocacy group says this report is not meant to pick on the states with poor performance but to find out what works and what doesn't, so that everyone is safer on the road.

Stefanie Bryant, Reporter
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