
INSURANCE INSTITUTE FOR HIGHWAY SAFETY

NEWS RELEASE

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CRASH RISK IS LOWER AMONG TEENS SUBJECT TO CORE PROVISIONS OF GRADUATED LICENSING

ARLINGTON, VA – Experts at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety in the United States and the Traffic Injury Research Foundation in Canada today released research on the core provisions needed in graduated licensing laws to ensure significant reductions in collisions and injuries. Some day soon all new drivers in North America may be subject to graduated licensing, an increasingly popular approach to reducing new drivers' risk of collisions.

Six Canadian provinces and 24 U.S. states have enacted some form of graduated licensing since 1994. But not all graduated licensing systems are the same.

"Florida was the first state in the 1990s to enact core elements of graduated licensing," says Allan F. Williams, the Institute's senior vice president for research. "For 15 to 17 year-olds combined, fatal and injury crash rates were down 9 percent in Florida during 1997, the first full year of graduated licensing, compared with 1995. Easy and quick access to full-privilege licensure at an early age has contributed to the high crash rate of young drivers in North America. Graduated licensing offers a more sensible and less risky way for drivers to begin, as indicated by these Florida results as well as by earlier evaluations of graduated systems in New Zealand and Ontario, Canada."

Graduated licensing is a system for phasing in on-the-road driving, allowing beginners to get their initial experience under lower risk conditions and introducing them in stages to more complex driving situations. Essentially an apprentice

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system, graduated licensing involves three stages. The first is a supervised learner's period, then an intermediate licensing phase that permits unsupervised driving only in less risky situations, and finally a full-privilege license when conditions of the first two stages are met. Within this framework, substantial variation is possible in terms of specific provisions and their duration. Policymakers need to know which features their system should include.

"Ideally, the learner's stage should have a minimum age of at least 16, a minimum mandatory holding period of 6 months, and certification of 30-50 hours of supervised driving," says Daniel R. Mayhew, senior vice president at the Traffic Injury Research Foundation. "During the intermediate stage, there should be strict limitations on nighttime driving and transporting teenage passengers. And no one should receive a full-privilege license before the age of 18."

Specific recommendations for the core provisions of graduated licensing systems are available in "Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America," co-authored by the Institute and the Traffic Injury Research Foundation. Results of the evaluation of Florida's graduated licensing law are in "Effect of Florida's Graduated Licensing Program on the Crashes of Teenage Drivers" by R.G. Ulmer et al. Both reports are available from the Institute.

End 2-page release on crash reduction under graduated licensing.

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