

TRAFFIC CRASHES

are the #1 cause of
death for teens



WHY?

TRAFFIC CRASHES

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- A total of 4,054 teenagers ages 13 to 19 nationwide died in motor vehicle crashes in 2008.
- In Pennsylvania in 2010, fatalities in crashes that involved a 16- or 17-year-old driver increased from 40 in 2009 to 57 last year, a 43 percent increase.
- PA is only one of 7 states without an improved Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law.
- Teen driver and peer passenger deaths account for one-quarter of total teen deaths from any cause.
- The greatest lifetime chance of crashing occurs in the first 6 months after licensure.
- Teen drivers (ages 16 to 19) have fatal crashes at four times the rate of adult drivers (ages 25 to 69).
- It's not that teens don't hear safety messages; instead they interpret them through different cultural filters.

INEXPERIENCE

- Most teen crashes are the result of “rookie” mistakes. Teens need time and practice to gain driving experience.
- Passing a driver’s test alone does not make a young driver “experienced.” It takes many hours of practice to become a skilled driver.
- The overwhelming majority of teen crashes are caused by inexperience and distractions, not “thrill-seeking” or deliberate risk-taking.

LACK OF RESTRAINT

- 55 percent of 16-to-20-year-olds killed in crashes in 2008 were unrestrained.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

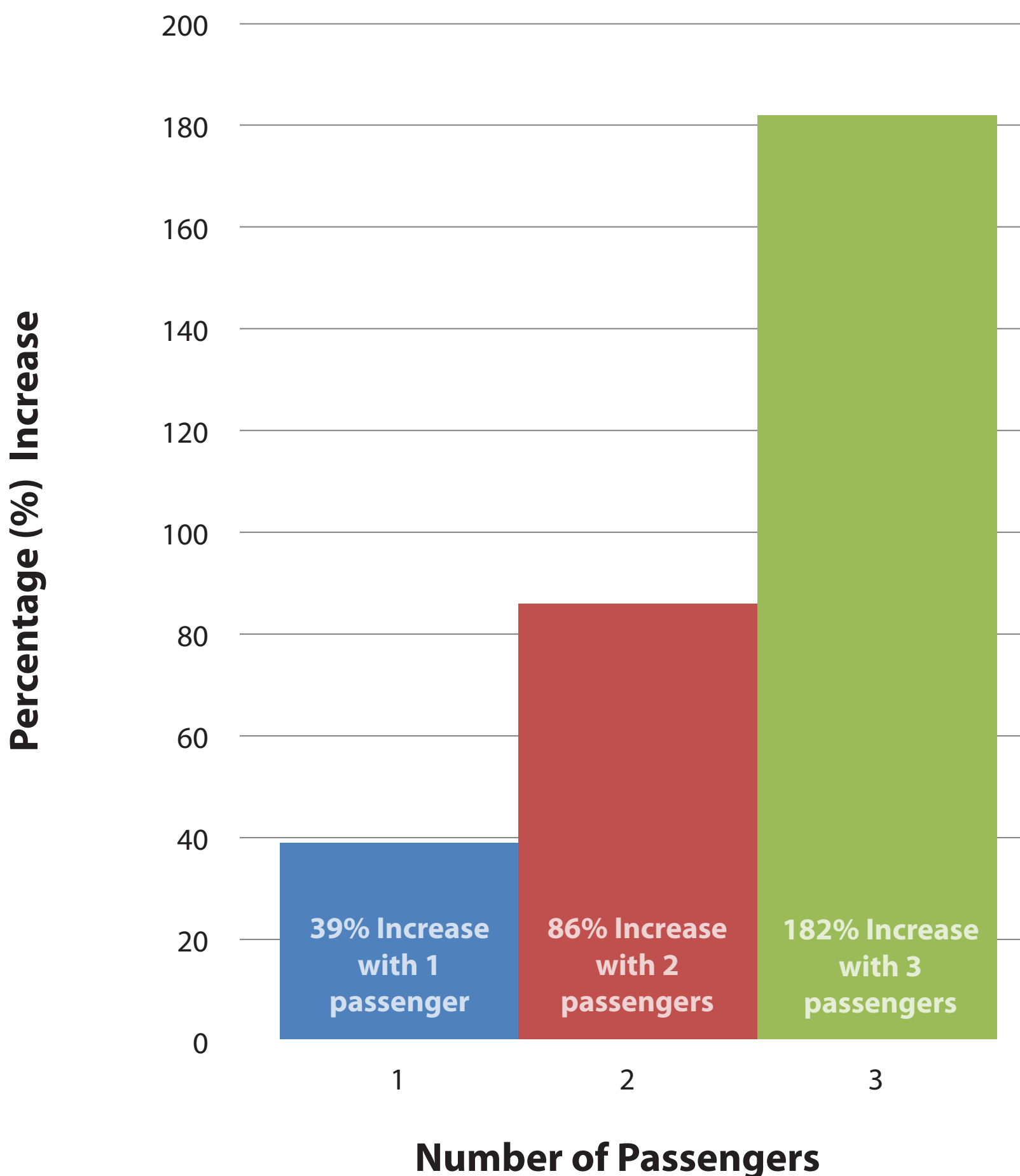
- Research has shown that Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws are associated with reduced teen driver fatalities.
- States with comprehensive GDL programs in place report as much as a 40 percent drop in the number of fatal crashes among 16-year-old drivers.
- Although three components of GDL separately contribute to reduced crash rates (extended learner permit period; nighttime driving restrictions; and passenger restrictions), GDL programs that combine all three may result in the **highest crash reductions** among **16-year-old drivers**.
- Nearly all states have some components of a GDL law in place to help protect teens from serious accidents during the first several months of driving.
- GDL laws are designed to give new drivers experience under low-risk conditions.
- According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, state officials and other transportation safety experts, key requirements of a GDL system include a minimum entry age, a learner's permit stage that includes supervised driving, and **restrictions on nighttime driving and driving with teen passengers**.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- An AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety study that analyzed fatal crashes of 16-year-old drivers in 43 states before and after GDL implementation indicated an **11 percent reduction** in fatal crash involvement in **28 states with a three-stage GDL system**.
- That same study showed a **21 percent reduction** in fatal crashes of 16-year-old drivers in states that implemented a GDL system with **four** requirements and a **38 percent reduction** in states with **five** GDL requirements.
- Strong GDL laws, which allow teens to gain experience under lower-risk conditions, are proven to be one effective measure.
- To further reduce the number of deaths and injuries with teens behind the wheel, public health programs and GDL and other traffic safety laws should focus on the key teen behaviors known to raise crash risk: speeding, alcohol use, distractions from peer passengers and cell phones, as well as failure to wear a seat belt.
- In the first full year following the upgraded GDL law in Illinois, teen driving deaths were reduced by 40 percent.

DISTRACTIONS

- Teens have the highest per-person rate of drivers involved in fatal crashes — 27.2 drivers per 100,000 people in 2008.
- The chances a 16-year-old will die in a crash increase...
 - o **39 percent with 1 passenger**
 - o **86 percent with 2 passengers**
 - o **182 percent with 3 or more passengers**



DISTRACTIONS

- 63 percent of teen passenger deaths in 2008 occurred in vehicles driven by another teen.
- The distractions proven to kill teens: teen passengers and cell phones.
- 43 states have passenger restrictions.
- Numerous studies have shown lower teen crash rates after implementing a passenger restriction for teen drivers.
- NHTSA-sponsored research in three states indicated that crashes involving 16-year-olds decreased annually by about 740 in California, 170 in Massachusetts, and 450 in Virginia in the years immediately after implementing passenger restrictions.
- Teens age 12-16 are more likely than any other age to die in a car crash as a passenger.
- North Carolina's 1-passenger limit led to a 30 percent decrease among drivers age 16 and 13 percent among drivers age 17.