



SANTA CRUZ POLICE DEPARTMENT
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MEDIA RELEASE



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Rules for the Road: Week Dedicated to Teaching Teen Drivers How to be Safe Behind the Wheel
National Teen Driver Safety Week is Oct. 21-27

This week is National Teen Driver Safety Week, and the Santa Cruz Police Department wants to remind parents and guardians the importance of talking to their teen drivers about new responsibilities and rules that come with operating a vehicle.

“For teens, getting a license is a rite of passage tied to freedom and independence, but is also something that can be dangerous because teens lack experience behind the wheel and are more likely to take risks,” said Chief Andrew Mills. “National Teen Driver Safety Week is a way to encourage all parents to instill good driving habits that help their teens stay safe on the road.”

The reality is that vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for teens ages 15 to 18. According to data from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS), there were 73,736 crashes in 2016 involving drivers 16 to 20 years old in California alone. In those crashes, 437 people were killed.

Throughout the week (Oct. 21-27), the Santa Cruz Police Department will join the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) in offering tips to parents and caregivers on how to talk to teens about the consequences of making dangerous and illegal choices behind the wheel.

- **Graduated Driver License (GDL):** Learn about California’s [GDL laws](#), which place restrictions on passengers and driving late at night during the first year they have a license.
- **Lead by example:** Practice safe driving yourself. Have practice driving sessions with your teen.
- **Set Ground Rules:** No cell phones, no passengers, no speeding, no alcohol, no drowsy driving, and always buckle up. No keys until they know the rules. Establish consequences you will enforce if your teen breaks the rules.
- **With driving comes great responsibility:** Remind your teen that driving requires your full attention. Texts and phone calls can wait. Teach them about zero-tolerance laws, and the adult consequences they face for driving after drinking or using drugs. Urge them to never ride with someone who has been drinking or using drugs.

“Whether it’s drinking and driving, not wearing a seat belt, speeding, driving distracted or with friends in the car, it’s important for parents to let their teen know that driving is not a right, but a privilege,” said Chief Mills. “It can be taken away when they don’t follow the rules.”

To learn more about teen driver safety, visit the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) website at <http://ghsa.org/html/issues/teens/index.html>.



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