

Teen drivers just not paying attention, data says

Crash reports show worse than thought.

PRNewswire

The most comprehensive research ever conducted into crash videos of teen drivers has found significant evidence that distracted driving is likely much more serious a problem than previously known, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The unprecedented video analysis finds that distraction was a factor in nearly 6 out of 10 moderate-to-severe teen crashes, which is four times as many as official estimates based on police reports.

Researchers analyzed the six seconds leading up to a crash in nearly 1,700 videos of teen drivers taken from in-vehicle event recorders. The results showed that distraction was a factor in 58 percent of all crashes studied, including 89 percent of road-departure crashes and 76 percent of rear-end crashes. NHTSA previously has estimated that distraction is a factor in only 14 percent of all teen driver crashes.

"Access to crash videos has allowed us to better understand the moments leading up to a vehicle impact in a way that was previously impossible," said

Peter Kissinger, president and CEO of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. "The in-depth analysis provides indisputable evidence that teen drivers are distracted in a much greater percentage of crashes than we previously realized."

The most common forms of distraction leading up to a crash by a teen driver included:

- Interacting with one or more passengers: 15 percent of crashes
- Cell phone use: 12 percent of crashes
- Looking at something in the vehicle: 10 percent of crashes
- Looking at something outside the vehicle: 9 percent of crashes
- Singing/moving to music: 8 percent of crashes
- Grooming: 6 percent of crashes
- Reaching for an object: 6 percent of crashes

"It is troubling that passengers and cell phones were the most common forms of distraction given that these factors can increase crash risks for teen drivers," said AAA CEO Bob Darbelnet. "The situation is made worse by the fact that young drivers have spent less time behind the wheel and cannot draw upon their previous experience to manage unsafe conditions."

Researchers found that drivers manipulating their cell phone (includes calling, texting or other uses), had their eyes off the road for an average of 4.1 out of the final six seconds leading up to a crash. The researchers also measured reaction times in rear-end crashes and found that teen drivers using a cell phone failed to react more than half of the time before the impact, meaning they crashed without braking or steering.

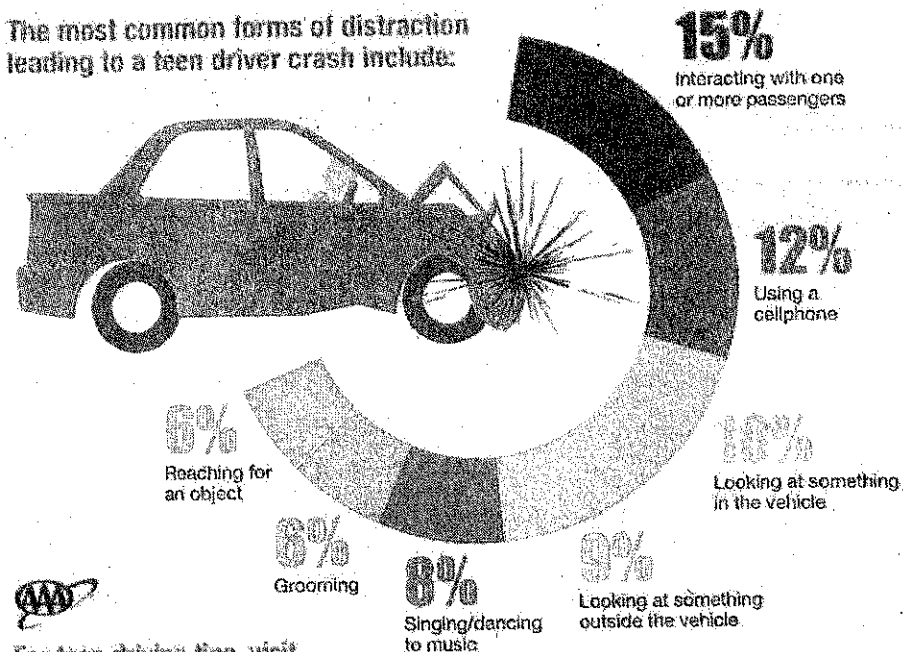
"This study shows how important it is for states to review their graduated driver licensing and distracted driving laws to ensure they provide as much protection as possible for teens," continued Darbelnet. "AAA recommends that state laws prohibit cell phone use by teen drivers and restrict passengers to one non-family member for the first six months of driving."

Graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws allow new drivers to gain practical experience in a relatively safe environment by restricting their exposure to risky situations. Thirty-three states have laws that prevent cell phone use for teens and 18 states have passenger restrictions meeting AAA's recommendations.

Parents play a critical role in preventing distracted driving. AAA rec-

6 OUT OF 10 teen crashes involve driver distraction.

The most common forms of distraction leading to a teen driver crash include:



For teen driving tips, visit TeenDriving.AAA.com

ommends that parents teach teens about the dangers of cell phone use and restrict passengers during the learning-to-drive process. Before parents begin practice driving with teens, they should create a parent-teen driving agreement that includes strict ground rules relat-

ed to distraction. AAA offers a comprehensive driver education program, where teens can learn specifically how using a cell phone affects driving abilities and increases their crash risk. For more information, visit TeenDriving.AAA.com.

Teens have the highest

crash rate of any group in the United States.

About 963,000 drivers age 16-19 were involved in police-reported crashes in 2013, which is the most recent year of available data.

These crashes resulted in 383,000 injuries and 2,865 deaths.