TEEN DRIVING: THE STATISTICS ARE FRIGHTENING

- Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of teen fatalities. About 44% of all teen deaths in 2003 were attributed to vehicle crashes – more than triple the number of teen suicides and more than double the number of teen homicide victims (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

- Teen drivers are often at the wheel when these tragedies occur. In 2002, for example, 61% of teenage passenger deaths happened when another teen was driving (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).

- Teenagers far exceed all other age groups in terms of per capita deaths relating to vehicle crashes, both as drivers and passengers (AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety).

- One out of every five licensed 16-year-old drivers will be in a vehicle crash (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).

- The first year of unsupervised driving is the most dangerous. In fact, the crash risk drops by more than two-thirds after a driver completes his or her first 1,500 miles of independent driving (McCartt, Shabanova & Leaf, 2001).

- For 16- and 17-year-olds, carrying just one passenger increases the crash risk by about 50% (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety).

- Approximately two-thirds of teens killed in vehicle crashes in 2003 were not wearing seat belts (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

- More than one-third of teen driver fatalities involve speeding (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration).

Despite these staggering statistics, surveys indicate that less than 50% of new teenage drivers receive any formal driver training prior to receiving their license. Many states are actually cutting funding for formal driver's education programs in public high schools. Nationally, only 27 states offer financial support, according to a 2003 USA Today poll. That's a far cry from the late 1970s, when every state mandated in-school driver's education.

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