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Wolf Administration Hosts Roundtable Discussion with Teens on Safe Driving

Harrisburg, PA – Representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), State Police, Department of Education and local education and law enforcement representatives held a face-to-face forum at Cedar Cliff High School in New Cumberland today, sharing their collective knowledge with students from Cedar Cliff and Red Land high schools to mark Teen Driver Safety Week in Pennsylvania.

"We can all do our part to make highways safer by working together to help new drivers gain valuable experience and knowledge," said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. "Parents and teachers are an integral part of establishing a mentality of safety behind the wheel amongst teen drivers."

The forum was held to call attention to teen driver safety and share important information directly with teen drivers during the nationwide observance October 17-23. The question-and-answer format gave teens a chance to glean valuable information from knowledgeable sources they may not otherwise interact with. Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death for teens.

From 2016 to 2020, there were 82,066 crashes in Pennsylvania involving at least one 16-to-19-year-old driver resulting in 530 fatalities. Of those crashes, 45.6 percent involved the driver driving too fast for conditions (18,635 crashes), driver inexperience (7,988), driver distraction (8,574) or improper/careless turning (7,490). A total of 39,399 crashes included one or more of these factors.

The risk of a crash involving any of these factors can be reduced through practice, limiting the number of passengers riding with a new driver, obeying all rules of the road, and using common sense.

"Parents and caregivers should encourage safe driving behavior long before their teen gets a learner's permit by consistently modeling good habits behind the wheel," said Colonel Robert Evanchick, commissioner of the Pennsylvania State Police. "Set a positive example by ensuring everyone in the car is buckled up, eliminate distractions in the vehicle, obey the speed limit and remember to drive defensively."

PennDOT suggests that parents consider the following recommendations to help their children become safe and responsible drivers:

- Set a good example with your own driving habits.
- Have regular conversations with your teen about safe driving skills before they get their learner's permit.
- Establish a parent/teen driving contract.
- Ride with your teen occasionally after they receive their license to monitor driving skills.
- Enforce observance of speed limits and other rules of the road.
- Strongly encourage your teen to avoid distractions behind the wheel, such as talking or texting on their cell phone.
- Limit the number of passengers they have in their vehicle.
- Limit dawn, dusk, and nighttime driving until your teen gains more experience and enforce a curfew. Remember, state law prohibits 16- and 17-year-olds with a junior license from driving between 11:00 PM and 5:00 AM
- Gradually increase the amount of time/distance your teen is permitted to drive.

"Driving a car requires experience, skill, and undivided attention," said Department of Education Secretary Dr. Noe Ortega. "Driver education training programs are invaluable in preparing teenage drivers to get behind the wheel, keeping themselves, their passengers, and fellow drivers safe on the road."

As part of ongoing efforts to educate and assist teen drivers, PennDOT invites teens, their parents, teachers, and others to [share video messages on Instagram](#) about the personal costs of a crash, close calls, and advice on avoiding crashes. Anyone can join in this important conversation by using the hashtag #PATeenDriver.

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