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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Teen Driver Safety Week Oct. 20-27, 2019

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Transportation is asking parents to talk to their teenagers about driver safety next week.

National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 20-27, is a great time to remind new drivers that crashes are the leading cause of teen deaths in the United States, and staying safe requires safe practices.

Some of the greatest dangers for teen drivers include alcohol, inconsistent or no seat belt use, distracted and drowsy driving, speeding and passengers.

Talking points for parents to share with their teens include:

Phone use. Research shows dialing a phone number while driving increases a teen's risk of crashing by six times, and texting while driving increases the risk by 23 times. One in three teens who text say they have done so while driving, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

- Texts and phone calls can wait. Suggest putting phones in the back seat.
- It's a \$25-50 fine in New Mexico if caught using a cell phone while driving.
- Set an example by keeping your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel while driving. Novice teen drivers most often learn from watching their parents.

Passengers. Teen drivers were 2 ½ times more likely to engage in one or more potentially risky behaviors when driving with one teenage peer compared to when driving alone, according to another study cited by traffic safety officials.

- In New Mexico, a teen with a provisional license may **not** have more than one passenger under the age of 21 who is not an immediate family member.
- Teen drivers and all passengers are required to wear seat belts in New Mexico.
- Restricting the number of passengers a teen can have is an effective way to minimize distraction.

Speeding: Speeding is a critical safety issue for teen drivers. In 2016, it was a factor in 32 percent of the fatal crashes that involved passenger vehicle teen drivers.

- Teens who are monitored closely tend to speed less.
- Be a good role model. Never speed.
- Hold up on buying a teen a new car. Studies show teens with new driver's licenses are more likely to speed in their own vehicles versus driving the family sedan.
- If possible, parents should choose larger, newer cars rather than high-performance vehicles.

Drive sober: One in 10 teens in high school drinks and drives, according to the New Mexico Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Division.

- Underage drinking, as well as illicit drug use and over-the-counter and prescription drug misuse, is illegal and holds serious consequences.
- Never provide alcohol to teens. Do your part to prevent your teen from having access to alcohol.
- Teach teens about zero-tolerance laws, which make it illegal to drive with any measurable amount of specified drugs in the body.
- Remind teens it is never safe to ride in a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol or using drugs.
- Make sure teens know if they violate underage drinking laws, they face a trip to jail, the loss of their driver licenses, and dozens of unanticipated expenses including attorney fees, court costs, and other fines.

Buckle up, it's the law: Seat belt use is lowest among teen drivers. In fact, the majority of teenagers involved in fatal crashes are unbuckled.

- Not only is buckling up the law, it's also one of the easiest and most effective ways to reduce the chances of death and injury in a crash.
- The consequences of not buckling up include tickets, loss of driving privileges, injury or even death in the event of a crash.
- One of the best things you can do as a parent and role model is to always wear your seat belt in the car.

National Teen Driver Safety Week is a campaign of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NMDOT and state and local law enforcement agencies.