

WisDOT: June Law of the Month: Graduated driver license rules keep teen drivers safe

Posted on Wednesday, Jun 1, 2022

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This summer, many teenagers will get behind the wheel for the first time as they work to earn their driver license, but it can be a dangerous time of year for young drivers.

More than 30% of deaths involving teen drivers happen during the 100 Deadliest Days of summer - Memorial Day to Labor Day - according to AAA.

Wisconsin has many laws designed to prepare teenagers for safe driving, including the Graduated Driver License program. GDL is Wisconsin State Patrol's June Law of the Month.

"GDL restrictions and requirements help give our teens a safer start to their driving career by limiting higher-risk situations and distractions," Wisconsin State Patrol Superintendent Anthony Burrell said.

To be eligible for an instruction permit, you must be at least 15-years-old, be enrolled in a certified driver education program, and pass the knowledge and signs test. Drivers with an instruction permit are required to have a valid, regular license holder in the front seat of the vehicle: an instructor, parent or guardian, or someone 21 or older.

Drivers, age 16 to 18, can apply for a probationary license if they are violation free for at least six months, have completed a minimum of 50 hours of supervised driving (including 10 hours at night) with a parent or guardian, have completed all driver's education course work and behind-the-wheel hours with an instructor, and

pass a road test (or receive a waiver).

For the first nine months of a teen's probationary license, GDL restrictions aim to give new drivers an opportunity to develop skills in lower-risk situations.

Rules include limits on:

- **Passengers.** Only immediate family members, one person with a regular license, and one other passenger can be in the vehicle.
- **Late night driving.** Teens can drive alone from 5 a.m. to midnight. They can only drive alone late at night when traveling between home, school, or work.

GDL restrictions are extended by six months if the driver is convicted of a moving traffic violation, the driver violates any of the restrictions, or the driver's license is suspended or revoked for any reason. Demerit points double on subsequent convictions for moving violations for a driver with a probationary license.

All 50 states have GDL programs to limit high-risk driving situations for new drivers. GDL rules can reduce a teenager's crash risk by as much as 50%, according to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).

The restrictions, combined with safe driving practices, are key to saving lives on the roads. Parents play an important role in helping teenagers gain the experience and confidence they need to be a good driver.

"Our children learn a lot from us as parents and guardians. Set a good example when you're behind the wheel," Superintendent Burrell said. "Talk to your kids about the rules of the road and the dangers of risky driving behaviors. Buckle up, phone down. Every trip, every time."

These safe driving tips are crucial for drivers of any age:

- **Never drive impaired.** Any alcohol or drug use is illegal for teenagers.
- **Buckle up.** 88% of people in Wisconsin wore a seat belt in 2021, but half of all drivers and passengers who died in crashes were unbelted.
- **Avoid distractions.** Anything that takes your eyes off the road can be a distraction, especially cell phones. All cell phone use is banned for probationary license holders.
- **Watch your speed.** Traffic crashes are more dangerous when they involve excessive speed. Speeding is one of the main contributing factors for crashes

in Wisconsin.

Learn more about teen driver license requirements at wisconsin.dmv.gov/teedriver.

View the Wisconsin State Patrol Law of the Month online
at: <https://wisconsin.dot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>