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Vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death among teens, killing nearly 4,000 teenagers, 16 -20 years old, in traffic-related crashes each year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The Burleson Police Department is joining other law enforcement agencies in promoting National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 16-22. The week was established by Congress in 2007 to focus attention on the nation's epidemic of teen car crashes and to find solutions to lower teen drivers' fatal crash risk. This year's theme is to support parents in teaching their teens to drive. Teaching includes helping teens navigate the practice driving, monitoring teens as they drive alone, and fostering a bond between the parent and child with the goal of increasing teen driver safety.

The NHTSA has developed a multi-tiered strategy to prevent motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries among teen drivers: increasing seat belt use, implementing graduated driver licensing, reducing teens' access to alcohol, and parental responsibility. According to the NHTSA, research shows the behaviors that contribute to teen-related crashes include inexperience and immaturity combined with speed, drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts, distracted driving (cell phone use, loud music, other teen passengers), drowsy driving, nighttime driving, and other drug use.

The Texas Graduated Driver License program has two phases. In Phase 1, a teen under 18 years old must have a learner or hardship license for a minimum of six months; be accompanied by a person who is at least 21 years old when driving; and maintain a valid learner license. With the completion of Phase One, reaching the age of 16, and the completion of the classroom and driving parts of driver education, the teen is eligible for a provisional license and Phase 2.

Phase 2 restricts the driving privileges of provisional license holders during the 12-month period following the issuance of the license. Those restrictions include:

- The teen may not operate a vehicle with more than one passenger in the vehicle who is under the age of 21 and who is not a family member;
- The teen may not operate a motor vehicle unless in sight of the teen's parent/guardian, between midnight and 5 a.m. unless the teen must drive to attend or participate in employment, a school-related activity, or because of a medical emergency;
- The teen may not drive while using a wireless communication device, except in case of an emergency.

For more, go to <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers>, www.teendriversource.org and www.ridelikeafriend.org.