

Young drivers and high powered vehicles

In summary

- Contrary to popular myth, young drivers are no more at risk of death or serious injury by driving powerful cars than other drivers.
- In 2006, drivers aged 17-24 years represented 14% of all WA licence holders, but accounted for 33% of all fatalities and 28% of all hospitalised casualties.
- WA research showed that between 1999 and 2000, only 3% of young driver crashes involved vehicles with a high power to weight ratio (PWR)*.
- Even small cars with a low PWR* can easily achieve speeds high enough to kill or seriously injure a driver, their passenger or other road users.
- During 2006, 50% of drivers and riders involved in fatal crashes where speed was a factor were aged between 17 and 24 years of age.
- It is not high powered vehicles that cause crashes, it is the fact that inexperienced drivers speed in vehicles of all types which is largely responsible for their over representation in crash statistics.

Risk factors for speeding among young drivers:

- being male;
- engaging in risky health behaviours such as frequent and excessive alcohol consumption and illicit drug use;
- propensity to be impulsive and sensation seeking; and
- tendency to violate formal and informal road rules.

Young drivers perceive the outcomes of speeding less negatively than older drivers.

Young drivers also perceive more support from their peers for engaging in risky driving such as speeding.

The research:

Prior to recent research conducted by the University of Western Australia (UWA), there had been few studies investigating the association between vehicle performance and crash involvement among young drivers.

The UWA research concluded that there is no evidence to suggest that vehicle restrictions would be effective in reducing the crash involvement of young drivers and that young drivers themselves, not their vehicles, should continue to be the focus of road safety countermeasures.

Therefore, rather than focus on the vehicle as the cause of speeding, it is recommended that the speeding behaviour of young novice drivers be targeted through changes to the licensing system and penalty structure.

These strategies are being brought in through the novice driver reform package.

As novice drivers represent the most 'at-risk' group for crash involvement and injury, there is a need to consider this group's access to vehicles which offer good occupant protection to minimise the risk of injury.

It is recommended that novice drivers and their parents are provided with information which highlights the importance of purchasing safer vehicles.

SAFER CARS SAVE LIVES



** The power to weight ratio is the power the engine generates divided by the vehicle's (or engine's) weight.*

Young drivers and high powered vehicles

What can you do?

- Encourage increased hours of supervised driving. Research indicates that a substantial amount of supervised driving experience is required to reduce the crash risk of novice drivers. The recommended amount of supervised driving is 120 hours which research has shown, reduces the crash risk of newly licenced drivers by up to 40%.
- Support the introduction of the new novice driver reform package. Strategies to be implemented include:
 - ▶ Six months minimum in Learner Phase Two;
 - ▶ Learner's permits will be valid for three years, instead of one;
 - ▶ A zero Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit for Learner and Provisional drivers;
 - ▶ Those supervising Learner drivers will be subject to 0.00% BAC limit and must be unimpaired by illicit drugs;
 - ▶ During the first six months of their Provisional licence, novices will be unable to drive between midnight and 5am, unless they are travelling to or from work, studying or if they are seeking urgent medical attention for themselves or their passenger; and
 - ▶ A graduated demerit point system will be introduced, along with warning letters with each infringement, which will ensure that:
 - ◆ Drivers who accrue four or more demerit points in the time between getting their Learner's permit and completing 12 months of Provisional driving will be disqualified from driving for a period of three months.
 - ◆ Drivers who accrue eight or more demerit points in the time between beginning and completing the entire Provisional licence period will be disqualified from driving for a period of three months.

- Implement education strategies to improve novice driver/parental knowledge about factors affecting vehicle safety.
- Promote ANCAP and the Used Car Safety Ratings.
- Encourage participation in the School Drug Education and Road Aware *Keys for Life* Program.



For further information about young drivers and high powered vehicles, visit:

- ◆ www.officeofroadsafety.wa.gov.au
- ◆ www.dpi.wa.gov.au/licensing/1210.asp
- ◆ www.sdera.wa.edu.au/index.html
- ◆ www.keys2drive.rac.com.au
- ◆ www.rac.com.au/go/motoring/car-and-road-safety/car-safety-ratings-search
- ◆ www.roadwise.asn.au