

NEW LAWS PASSED REGARDING TEEN DRIVERS AND CHILD BOOSTER SEAT USAGE

Parents need to be aware of recent new laws that go into effect September 1 regarding driving and child passenger safety:

- HB 339 prohibits teens under 18 from texting or talking on a cell phone while driving.
- HB 537 requires that everyone in the car, regardless of age and regardless of where they are sitting, needs to wear a seatbelt.
- SB 61 requires that all children younger than 8 years and less than four feet nine inches tall be in a child safety seat system.

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Teen Drivers

Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America. Inexperience, driving while distracted by cell phone use and other teen passengers, and failure to wear seatbelts are all contributing factors.

Parents can help their teens become safer drivers by taking an active role. Supervise practice driving and be a good role model by practicing safe driving yourself. Remind teens of the new laws regarding cell phone use and texting while driving. Remind them that they and all passengers are required to wear seatbelts.



Booster Seats

Car crashes remain the number one killer of children ages 2-14 in the United States. The Safekids Buckle Up Campaign recommends the following safety tips:

- Use a booster seat correctly in a back seat every time your child rides in a car.
- Use a booster seat until your child weighs between 80 and 100 pounds, and is about 4 feet, 9 inches tall. For most children, that will be between ages 8 and 12.
- Tell all drivers who transport your child that booster seat use is a must when your child is in their vehicle.
- Booster seats are not installed the same way car seats are. They sit on the vehicle seat and are used to properly position the adult safety belt for an older child. Always use a lap and shoulder belt with a booster seat.
- Never place the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back.
- Be sure all occupants wear safety belts correctly every time. Children learn from adult role models.

Educational materials and information about how to obtain child safety seats can be found at:

- [Texas Department of State Health Services Safe Riders Home](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders/default.shtm),
www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders/default.shtm
- [Safekids](http://www.usa.safekids.org), www.usa.safekids.org
- [Seatcheck](http://www.seatcheck.org), www.seatcheck.org

Safe Riders, part of the Texas Department of State Health Services, offers a child seat distribution and education program. Safe Riders partners with local community groups, who educate families regarding child passenger safety and distribute child safety seats to eligible families in accordance with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) guidelines. Eligibility requirements, educational videos and promotional flyers in English and Spanish are available at www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders/default.shtm.

For more information on Texas PTA's legislative priorities, please visit www.txpta.org/legislative