Driver Education

Instructional Guidance

The Tennessee Department of Education (department) has developed this guidance pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-204(a)(2), which requires the department, in collaboration with the Department of Safety, to develop guidelines that address specific topics for LEAs and public charter schools providing a driver education and training course.

Guidance

Driver education and training courses should be instructed using the most current Tennessee Driver License Manual. Instructors are encouraged to emphasize the following, as they have the potential for life-or-death outcomes for drivers, passengers, other vehicle occupants, and pedestrians:

Tips for Safe Driving and Sharing the Road

- Look as far down the road as possible to uncover important traffic information to make appropriate decisions.
- Maintain the proper following distance so you can comfortably determine the true hazards around your vehicle. Don't tailgate others.
- Scan - don't stare. Constantly shift your eyes while driving. Active eyes keep up with changing traffic conditions.
- We, as drivers, are not the only users of our streets and highways, and other people have certain rights and privileges on the highways that automobile drivers must be aware of and respect.
- Three major components to our highway transportation system must be considered when driving: 1) the driver, 2) the vehicle, and 3) the road. Neglect or inattention to any of these three will contribute to most accidents.

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- Human error is the single most common cause of traffic crashes. The leading factors in crashes are:
    - Excessive Speed
    - Lack of Concentration
    - Improper Evasive Action

Alcohol and Drug Use While Driving

- Alcohol enters the bloodstream quickly, and only time can sober a person up; coffee, exercise, or a cold shower will not speed up the process.
- Even small amounts of alcohol can reduce judgment, vision, reaction time, coordination, alertness, and concentration.
- Crash risk increases sharply as Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) rises. At .10 BAC, a driver is 7 times more likely to cause a crash; at .15 BAC, 25 times more likely; and at .17 BAC, 50 times more likely.
- Mixing alcohol with prescription or over-the-counter drugs can multiply dangerous effects and seriously impair driving ability.
- Driving under the influence of drugs, including prescription drugs, carries the same penalties as alcohol-related DUI.

Distracted Driving

- Distracted driving includes anything that takes your hands off the wheel, eyes off the road, or mind off driving.
- Texting is especially dangerous because reading or sending a text can take your eyes off the road for at least 5 seconds.
- At 55 mph, looking away for 5 seconds is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.
- Cell phones, GPS devices, music, passengers, eating, and grooming can all create dangerous distractions.
- Teen drivers are at higher risk because distractions such as passengers, loud music, phones, and inexperience increase crash chances.

Source: Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security. (2022, July 1). *Tennessee Comprehensive Driver License Manual.*

Additional Instructional Resources

- Tennessee Highway Safety Office
- Reduce TN Crashes
- Crash data dashboards
- Hands Free Tennessee
- Don't Drive Drowsy Foundation

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