



**For Immediate Release**

**For Release:**

**May 19, 2010**

**Teens Urged to Practice Safe Driving**

**May 20 cited as deadliest day for teens on road**

Jackson – May 20, may be just another day to some teens, while others are preparing for graduation, summer and the beginning of their futures. However, according to new information from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), it will sadly be the day many teen drivers will lose their lives. Commissioner of Insurance Mike Chaney urges all teens to practice safe driving skills on May 20, cited as the deadliest day for teens, claiming 63% more young lives than average over the past five years.

“I would encourage all young drivers, to take extra care while driving, not just on May 20, but every time they get behind the wheel,” Chaney said.

“Not only will they save their own lives, a safe driving record helps keeps insurance premiums down.”

Over the past five years, Mississippi crashes involving teen drivers claimed 845 lives.\* Other facts and statistics found by IIHS research include:

- Texting is a teen’s biggest distraction behind the wheel; (In 2009, the Mississippi Legislature addressed this issue by passing Senate Bill 2280 which strengthened the state’s Graduated Driver Licensing Laws and prohibited texting while driving during the learner’s permit and intermediate stages.)
- Crash rates for young drivers are high largely because of their immaturity combined with driving inexperience.
- 55% of motor vehicle crash deaths among teenagers in 2008 occurred on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday.
- 20% of teenage motor vehicle crash deaths in 2008 occurred between 9pm and midnight.
- 63% of teenage passenger deaths in 2008 occurred in vehicles driven by another teenager.

To prevent more Mississippi youths becoming part of those statistics the Mississippi Insurance Department offers the following safe driving tips:

- Always wear your seat belt--and make sure all passengers buckle up, too.
- Adjust your car's headrest to a height behind your head--not your neck--to minimize whiplash in case you're in an accident.
- Never try to fit more people in the car than the number of available seatbelts
- Obey the speed limit. Going too fast gives you less time to stop or react. Excess speed is one of the main causes of teenage accidents.
- Don't run red lights.
- Use turn signals to indicate your intention to turn or to change lanes.
- When the light turns green, make sure the intersection clears before you go.
- Don't drive like you own the road; drive like you own the car.
- Don't drink and drive, and don't ride with anyone who has been drinking. Call parents or friends to take you home if you need a ride.
- Don't blast the radio. You might miss hearing a siren or a horn that could warn you of possible trouble.
- Don't drive with small children or even small teenage friends as passengers in a front seat that has a passenger-side air bag.
- Be on the lookout for motorcycles, bikes, and pedestrians

\*Source: [saferoads4teens.org](http://saferoads4teens.org)

###