

Getting a driver's license is a significant milestone in a young person's life. As adults, we know that a driver's license comes with tremendous responsibilities. More importantly, we also know that serious consequences result from careless or reckless driving, consequences that can include [severe injuries](#) and even [death](#). Although we do our best to teach our teens to be safe and responsible drivers, the reality is that they are more likely to get in an accident than other age groups. If you have been involved in a car accident caused by a teenage driver, we recommend that you contact an experienced [car accident lawyer](#) for help in navigating the complexities of your case.

Teenage Driver Accident Statistics

The most recent statistics available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for the year 2020 paint a sobering picture:

- 1,885 teen drivers were killed in fatal car accidents, a 17% increase over the prior year
- Teen drivers represented 5.1% of all drivers on the road yet accounted for 8.5% of all fatal accidents
- 189,950 teen drivers were injured in car accidents, a 7% decrease from the prior year
- 21.4 per 100,000 licensed drivers involved in fatal car accidents were female teen drivers
- 56.59 per 100,000 licensed drivers involved in fatal car accidents were teen male drivers, more than twice the rate of teen female drivers
- 52% of teen drivers killed in car accidents were not wearing a seatbelt
- 29% of teen drivers killed in car accidents had some amount of alcohol in their system, while 82% of teen drivers killed in accidents had a BAC of .08% or higher

While the number of non-fatal crashes decreased, the fact that fatal accidents increased by 17% is alarming. The other statistics give some indication as to why this may have happened - teen drivers involved in fatal car accidents are very likely to be under the influence of alcohol and not wearing their seatbelts. In addition, these statistics could suggest that male drivers are more than twice as likely as female drivers to engage in these risky behaviors.

In the year 2020, North Carolina had one of the highest rates of teenage traffic fatalities with 14.2%.

Other Factors Underlying Teen Car Accidents

While alcohol use and not wearing a seatbelt partially explain the rate of fatal accidents, those two factors by themselves do not explain why teen drivers are more likely to get into car accidents than other age groups. Experts suggest that the following factors are also potential causes:

- **Brain development.** The human brain does not finish developing until our mid-20s, notably the prefrontal cortex. Among other things, the prefrontal cortex is responsible for impulse control and reasoning. As a result, teenagers are more likely to engage in impulsive, risky behavior.
- **Driver inexperience.** Teen drivers simply do not have the experience needed to recognize hazards and the skills to avoid accidents. They may be slower to recognize potential dangers and underestimate the risk of an accident thus leading to a crash. Studies suggest that teens are most likely to get into an accident within the first few months of getting their licenses.
- **Distractions.** Teen drivers are also more susceptible to distractions than older drivers. The primary culprits are smartphones and similar devices, prompting teens to text or use other apps instead of paying attention to the road. However, teens are also easily distracted by other teenage passengers, which is why North Carolina restricts the number of passengers under the age of 21 that teen drivers can have in the car while driving.
- **Speeding.** Speeding is one of the leading causes of car accidents for all age groups but according to the NHTSA, teenage male and female drivers were more likely to be speeding at the time of a fatal car accident than any other age group except females aged 21-24.

Who is Responsible When a Teen Driver Causes a Car Accident?

Regardless of the age of the drivers involved, most car accidents are the result of negligence on the part of one of the drivers. As a result, the first thing you must do if you have been involved in a car accident caused by a teen driver is prove that they were negligent. Assuming that you can prove that the teen driver was negligent, who is actually responsible for paying your damages?

To start, does the owner of the car [have liability insurance](#), whether that is the teen or the teen's parent or guardian? Very few teens (or adults, for that matter) have the ability to pay the losses associated with a serious car accident. Assuming that they have insurance, then the claim will be handled just as it would if an adult were driving.

Your claim may get more complicated, however, if there isn't sufficient insurance coverage to cover all of your losses. In that situation, you may need to consider pursuing a claim against the driver's parents (or legal guardian) or the

owner of the vehicle. There are a couple of options that may allow you to pursue a claim against someone other than the driver:

1. **Negligent entrustment:** you can hold the owner of the vehicle liable if the owner of the vehicle knew that the teen presented a specific hazard to other drivers on the road and the owner failed to make a reasonable effort to reduce the risk of harm. For example, the owner of the vehicle knew that the teen had been drinking at a party and yet allowed them to borrow their car to go pick up a friend.
2. **Family purpose:** the teen's parents can be held liable if the teen lived with their parents, the car was owned and used for family purposes, and the teen had express or implied permission to use the car.

Applying these theories of negligence to your claim can be challenging, but a knowledgeable car accident lawyer can help you obtain the compensation you need.

Injured in a Car Accident Caused by a Teen Driver? Contact Martin & Jones

Regardless of the age of the driver, you need fair compensation for your injuries and other losses. Let us help you start rebuilding your life - [contact us](#) today at 800-662-1234 to schedule a free consultation.