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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)

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### **(Neb.)-Chadron Police Encourage Parents To Discuss Driving Risks With Teens**

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 05/13/2013 09:00 AM

(Chadron)-The Chadron Police Department is encouraging parents to take a stand and get involved with teenage drinking. They know parenting is not always easy. Officers encourage parents to talk to their kids about the risk factors involved with drinking and driving, and remind everyone that 21 is 21. It's the law.

It is generally acknowledged that the greatest risk of traffic crashes is among teenage drivers. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers across the United States. For both men and women, drivers aged 16 to 19 years of age have the highest average annual crash and traffic violation rates of any other age group according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

What causes teenage drivers to be such risky drivers? There are many risk factors which contribute. Driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is a common cause of serious crashes, especially fatal ones, involving teenage drivers. Teenagers who drink and drive are at much greater risk of serious crashes than are older drivers with equal concentrations of alcohol in their blood. These crashes result in serious injuries and death.

For teenagers, the risk of being in a crash increases when they transport passengers-the fatality risk of drivers aged 16-17 years is 3.6 times higher when they are driving with passengers than when they are driving alone, and the relative risk of a fatal crash increases as the number of passengers increases. Passengers who are age peers may distract the teen drivers and encourage them to take more risks, especially for young males riding with young male drivers. When you add in the involvement of underage drinking the risks of serious injuries or death greatly increase.

The per mile crash rate for teenaged drivers is 3 times higher after 9:00 pm during the day. This is because the task of driving at night is more difficult; they have less experience driving at night than during the day; they are more sleep deprived, and/or because teenage recreational driving, which often involves alcohol, is more likely to occur at night.

The ability to detect hazards in the driving environment depends upon perceptual and information-gathering skills and involves properly identifying stimuli as potential threats. It takes time for young novice drivers to acquire this ability.

Risk perception involves subjectively assessing the degree of threat posed by a hazard and one's ability to deal with the threat. Young novice drivers tend to underestimate the crash risk in hazardous situations and overestimate their ability to avoid the threats they identify.

Teenagers tend to take more risks while driving partly due to their overconfidence in their driving abilities. Young novice drivers are more likely to engage in risky behaviors like speeding, tailgating, running red lights, violating traffic signs and signals, making illegal turns, passing dangerously, and failure to yield to pedestrians.

Teenagers tend to wear safety belts less often than older drivers. Novice teenage drivers have not yet completely mastered basic vehicle handling skills and safe-driving knowledge they need to drive safely.