



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

March 1, 2012

Dear Teen Safety Advocate:

The loss of any life in a traffic crash is tragic, but the death of a young driver is especially distressing. In 2009, we lost 2,336 15-20 year-old drivers in motor vehicle crashes. While the trend in fatal crashes has been down over the last 20 years, young drivers continue to be injured or die at an alarming rate.

Motor vehicle crashes not only harm individuals, they also impact the economy. Among other costs, the expense of health care interventions, vehicle repairs, public safety personnel response, traffic congestion and increased insurance premiums are avoided if a crash never occurs. Starting a new driver on a life-long career of safe driving can have an immediate and long-term financial impact.

I firmly believe that an effective driver education program – along with proven safety legislation, active law enforcement and positive engagement of parents, schools and other community members – is an important element in a program to protect these young drivers. Over the past several years, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has supported the development of several products designed to improve the quality of driver education provided to novice drivers. This includes the development of:

- 1) Curriculum standards that outline WHAT should be taught;
- 2) model curricula that demonstrate HOW it can be taught; and
- 3) administrative standards that outline HOW driver education should be delivered

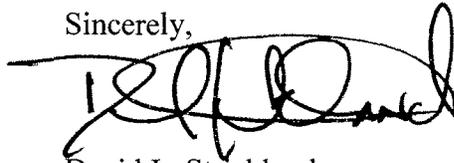
NHTSA is now announcing the release of its latest study on driver education: *A Fresh Look at Driver Education in America*. This study reports that integrating driver education more thoroughly with graduated driver licensing (GDL) systems, strengthening driver testing, involving parents in the driver education process and preparing them to manage risks for their new driver, and extending the duration of young driver training may have significant safety benefits. Accompanying this letter is a packet of materials including this new study and several other important resources. Among these are administrative standards for driver education programs that were recently developed by a team of national experts. These administrative standards provide guidance on how a driver education program can be implemented to have the best chance to produce safe young drivers. A list of other resources for State and local programs is also included.

Full copies of these reports and other related information can be located on our website at: www.nhtsa.gov/DriverEducationProgram.

Driver education is a key part of the comprehensive approach needed to reduce tragic young driver crashes and their toll on our economy. I encourage each State to examine its youth crash and fatality data, determine what countermeasures are appropriate, support a strong GDL program and work toward implementation of a driver education program following the guidance outlined in the national curriculum and administrative standards.

Thank you for your dedication to driver education and to the safety of our teen drivers. Please contact your NHTSA Regional Office if we may be of any assistance to you regarding young drivers or other highway safety matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David L. Strickland", written over a horizontal line.

David L. Strickland

Enclosures:

Driver Education Toolkit

NHTSA Regional Offices Contact Information