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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2009

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OHS Recognizes 10 Year Anniversary of Life Saving GDL Law
Law has contributed to over 50% drop in crash involvement of 16 yr old drivers

Dover – Ten years ago on July 1st, a new law with the goal of saving young lives on our roadways went into effect. Now a decade later, the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law is likely the single greatest contributing factor responsible for a 59% decline in the number of 16 year old drivers involved in Delaware motor vehicle crashes.

GDL laws give teenagers more behind the wheel practice after they have finished driver education classes, by requiring them to be supervised by a parent or other responsible adult for the first year or longer depending on a state's law. GDL systems set up additional restrictions on night time driving, distractions, and the number of passengers allowed in a vehicle with the new teen driver during this time.

In 1998, the year before Delaware's GDL law went into effect, 16-year old drivers alone were involved in 1,001 motor vehicle crashes in our state. 10 years later, 16-year old drivers were involved in 415 motor vehicle crashes, fewer than 50% the number from a decade earlier.

"A great deal of work went into getting this life saving law passed and it is very rewarding to see this kind of result 10 years after its implementation," said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. "Our goal was to improve the safety of our youngest, most inexperienced drivers and it looks like we have accomplished that."

In 1998, 16 and 17 year olds made up 2.6% of licensed Delaware drivers and were involved in 6.6% of all crashes. In 2008, while they made up just 2.2% of licensed Delaware drivers their crash involvement had dropped to 3.9% of all crashes. Additionally, 16 year old driver involvement in fatal crashes dropped from 7 in 1998 to 1 in 2008, and involvement in injury crashes dropped from 372 in 1998 to just 95 last year.

Signed into law on May 22nd, 1998, the GDL law went into effect and was implemented on July 1, 1999 to give state safety, education, and DMV officials a chance to set up the new requirements. At that time, the law still allowed teens to obtain a driving permit at 15 years, 10 months, but lengthened the time of supervised driving from 60 days to one year. It also limited the number of passengers a permit holder could carry to two.

Over the years, there have been several revisions to the law. They include banning the use of cell phones by teens on their permit in 2005, increasing the age to obtain a permit to 16, further restricting the number of passengers the permit holder is allowed to carry to 1, requiring a minimum of 50 hours supervised driving time with the sponsor, and adding lack of seat belt use into permit violations in 2006. Finally in 2008, a law setting penalties of \$575.00 or 30 days in jail for sponsors who knowingly allow GDL permit holders to drive unsupervised was passed.

Currently, teens who complete Driver Education may obtain a GDL permit starting at age 16. For the first year of their driving time, they may only carry one non-related passenger in addition to their Supervisor, they may not use cell phones to talk or text and failure to wear a seat belt will result in a 2 month license suspension. They must be supervised while driving at all times for the first 6 months, logging a minimum of 50 hours with a supervisor, including 10 hours of night time driving. During the second six months of driving, they may drive unsupervised between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. but outside of those hours may only drive when supervised. Exceptions to unsupervised night time driving exist for work, church and school activities on the permit holder's school grounds only. Any time the permit is suspended must be made up before they will be granted unrestricted driving privileges.

OHS continues its efforts to improve teen driver safety. In 2004 it created the GDL Parent Orientation Program to educate parents of teen drivers about their responsibilities under the law. Additionally, OHS participates in a statewide Teen Driver Task Force lead by DMV. Two recently announced Task Force initiatives are the launch of a teen driver website at www.teendriving.de.dmv.gov and starting on July 1st the availability of bright yellow, reflective Novice Driver car magnets for parents to use when teens are behind the wheel.

OHS will conduct a formal evaluation of the success of its Graduated Driver Licensing law in the coming year. For more information on GDL laws and information you can also visit the OHS website at www.ohs.delaware.gov.

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