

Parents: Protect Your Teen from Marijuana-Impaired Driving

The problem

- Marijuana use is impairing. It decreases motor coordination, slows reaction time, and impairs judgment of time and distance, all of which are critical for driving.¹
- Research on crashes in Washington state, which legalized marijuana, has shown that more drivers involved in fatal crashes tested positive for marijuana after legalization.²
- Although marijuana may be legal in some states, driving while impaired is unsafe and illegal in all states, the District of Columbia, and the commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
- Driving under the influence of marijuana is dangerous for all drivers, but teens are especially vulnerable because of their limited driving experience.
- In 2022, 3,615 teen drivers (ages 15 to 19) were involved in crashes that included fatalities.³

Related crash

A recent investigation highlights the safety risks associated with marijuana-impaired driving among teens.

We investigated an intersection collision in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, in which six vehicle occupants, all teens, died ([HWY22FH008](#)).



Source: Oklahoma Department of Public Safety

A 16-year-old driver who had held an intermediate driver's license for about 4 months approached an intersection and briefly slowed without stopping at the stop sign, accelerated, and turned left in front of an oncoming truck-tractor in combination with a trailer loaded with gravel. The car driver was likely impaired by recent use of marijuana.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). 2014. "[Cannabis/Marijuana](#)." In *Drugs and Human Performance Fact Sheets*, DOT HS 809 725, 7-12. Washington, D.C. Revised April 2014.

² Tefft, B.C. and L.S. Arnold. 2020. [Cannabis Use Among Drivers in Fatal Crashes in Washington State Before and After Legalization](#). Research Brief. Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

³ NHTSA. 2024. [Teen Distracted Driver Data: Teens and Distracted Driving in 2022](#)." Washington, D.C.

What can parents do?

- When talking to your teen about driving safety, be sure to address the risks of marijuana-impaired driving.
- Talk to your teen about the risks of marijuana use and its impairing effects on motor coordination, judgment, and reaction time. Discuss how marijuana use can negatively affect your teen's ability to drive safely.
- Remind your teen that driving while impaired is illegal. Some states have zero-tolerance policies not just for impairment, but for any recent marijuana use before driving.
- Discuss strategies for making safe and responsible choices to avoid marijuana-impaired driving or riding with marijuana-impaired drivers.
- Set the example by driving unimpaired by any drugs (legal or illegal). Be consistent between the messages you give your teen and your own driving behaviors. Novice teen drivers most often learn by observing their parents.

Interested in more information?

- **NTSB - Teen and Young Driver Safety**
<https://www.nts.gov/youth>
- **NHTSA - Understanding How Marijuana Affects Driving**
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/drug-impaired-driving/understanding-how-marijuana-affects-driving>
- **AAA - Cannabis & Driving**
<https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/substance-impaired-driving/cannabis-driving/>
- **National Conference of State Legislatures - Drugged Driving | Marijuana-Impaired Driving**
<https://www.ncsl.org/transportation/drugged-driving-marijuana-impaired-driving>

NTSB Safety Alerts can be accessed from the [Safety Alerts](#) page at www.nts.gov. For additional information on the NTSB investigation in this alert, access the [public docket](#) using the investigation number HWY22FH008 cited above. Use the [CAROL Query](#) to search NTSB safety recommendations and investigations.

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