

Recent Rule Change For Teens No Friends Allowed.

By Cathy Tyson

Newly licensed teenage drivers throughout the state are subject to more restrictions than ever. Oddly enough, local teens aren't thrilled. "It's a ludicrous law, a year is far too long," says Campolindo sophomore Mike Boyer. "They should trust more in the youth of America."

The State of California has a new graduated driver licensing system as of 2006 to regulate teen driving. Specifically, from the date a provisional license is issued, for the first year no passengers under age 20 are allowed in the car unless a licensed driver age 25 or older is present. Also no driving is permitted between 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., unless with a licensed driver 25 or older. Statistics have demonstrated the benefits. Teen passenger deaths and injuries from crashes of 16 year olds fell 40%, and at-fault fatal and injury collisions involving 16-year-old drivers have declined an impressive 24%, since the rule change.

Therefore if a group of sophomores at Acalanes want to go to a nearby convenience store for snacks after class, each and every kid will need to drive their own car. This may not come as much of a surprise to Lamorinda parents, but regardless of the consequences, some teens may break the rules.

"I never give warnings, 100% tickets," says Officer Mooney of the Orinda Police Department, for violations of the probationary license. "Parents don't seem to understand that kids drive at their parent's pleasure." While it's true that a teen driver would need to be pulled over for something else, for example speeding or an improper turn, OPD will write up a citation for a violation of the probationary license along with the other infraction. Lafayette and Moraga police departments echoed the theme of enforcement, as well.

Penalties are at the sole discretion of the Court, fine or community service or both. First time violation is a minimum of \$35 and a possibility of between 8 to 16 hours of community service, second time a minimum of \$50 and possibly 16 to 24 hours of community service, according to the DMV. It can go much, much higher, depending on the driver and the number of infractions.

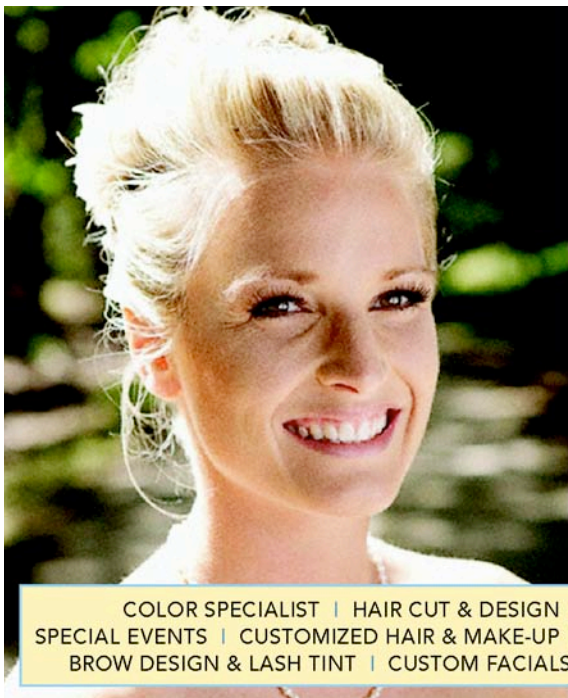
Every rule has exceptions, and this one is no different. A note is required explaining why the teenager must drive and when the necessity will end, and only under certain circumstances. Car-pooling with neighborhood kids is not ok, according to Officer Mooney. Approved reasons are: medical necessity,

school or school authorized activities, employment necessity, immediate need of a family member, and emancipated minor. Check the DMV website for more lengthy explanations of these exceptions, www.dmv.ca.gov/teenweb.

Tagging along as a passenger with a first year driver is unfortunately not uncommon. They rationalize their behavior by noting that they are not the one who'll get in trouble. Another creative excuse is that teens will drive "better" with an unauthorized pal passenger, because they don't want to get ticketed, so it's really an incentive to slow down and pay attention.

"Hell, no" said Heather Peri, mother of newly licensed son, Anthony, he is not allowed to drive other kids. "Obey the rules" is the family motto. She has been to two funerals recently, and says, "it's just not negotiable, period."

Parents of teens are confronted with additional whining, because when the law was first phased-in the restriction was only for six months. In households that have a sophomore and a senior, the senior only had to wait half the time his younger sibling is now required to wait. "Deal with it," advises Miramonte senior and older brother Ben Tyson to his younger brother Jake Tyson.



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