

THE MAINE BUREAU OF HIGHWAY SAFETY TEEN DRIVER AWARENESS PROGRAM

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The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety has developed and introduced a *“Teen Driver Awareness Program”*. This program was developed in conjunction with AAA of Northern New England and is a modified version of the AAA *“Dare to Prepare”* Program. The Bureau obtained permission to revamp the original program to include modules on Impaired Driving, Distracted Driving and Seat Belt Usage. The Program targets teens, ages 14 to 16, and was developed for pre-permitted teens, newly-permitted teens and parents. The two hour presentation is designed to increase awareness and provide the participants with information on the Maine Graduated Driver License system, Crash Statistics, Seat Belts, Impaired Driving, distracted Driving/Texting and Parental Involvement in the learning to drive process. The Program is divided into modules and may be presented in its entirety or as individual modules, depending on the audience and time constraints.

The Program is being brought into high schools and other venues by trained facilitators. The majority of the facilitators are School Resource Officers and other law enforcement professionals who participate in school activities and events. The Program was rolled out in August 2011 with the first training workshop. Since that time, the Bureau has conducted six (6) of the eight (8) hour workshops in various locations around the State. We currently have ninety-four (94) facilitators who have successfully completed the Program. During the morning workshop session, facilitators are provided a Facilitators Manual which contains a lesson plan, facilitators guide, videos and resource packet. The student leaves with all the information and power point on a USB drive to accommodate presentations. Rayette Hudon from AAA provides the instruction on the power point and program content. The Bureau of Highway Safety has also partnered with the Maine Office of Substance Abuse to incorporate a module on Underage Drinking Enforcement. Maryann Harakall, from the MeOSA, gives a forty-five (45) minute session on Underage Drinking Laws and Enforcement. The afternoon portion of the workshop is dedicated to familiarization and use of the Driving Simulators.

The Bureau of Highway Safety obtained a grant from the Ford Motor Company through the Governors Highway Safety Association. The grant funding allowed for the purchase of two (2) Driving Simulators to augment the classroom presentations. The Simulators were purchased from Virtual Driver and includes software specific to the issues of Impaired and Distracted Driving, as they pertain to new teen drivers. The *“One Simple Decision”* software provides hundreds of scenarios and variations which simulate real world driving experiences. The software has instructional videos and the student driver actually experiences *“consequences”* for improper decisions and traffic violations. Those *“consequences”* may range from a traffic citation, to arrest

for impaired driving. The students are exposed to a variety of scenarios which may include incarceration, treatment for injuries in a hospital setting, an appearance in court before a judge and other real life ramifications. The use of the Simulators is intended to reinforce the lessons learned in the classroom and give the students an insight into the short-term and long-term results of bad driving habits and risk taking behaviors. Once the facilitators have presented the 2 hour classroom session, they are loaned a Simulator for a period of time. The facilitator can then schedule time for the students to utilize the equipment and receive further instruction with the facilitator.

To date, the Kennebunk, Lewiston, Lisbon, Bath, Paris, Scarborough, York, Winslow, North Berwick, Cumberland, Waldoboro, Rumford, Sabattus and Portland Police Departments have all given presentations and utilized the Simulators either in their respective high schools or at driver education classes. Facilitators for the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department and the Maine State Police have also provided instruction at high schools with their jurisdictions. In addition, personnel from the Bureau of Highway Safety have been busy responding to numerous requests for presentations on the *"Teen Driver Awareness Program"*. Since the development of the Program, we have given presentations at Safety Days for Central Maine Power Company, the Maine Department of Transportation, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, made presentations at the Northeast Transportation Safety Conference, the Maine Youth Action Network Conference and for Midcoast Hospital, in Brunswick. Personnel from the Bureau also spent an entire day at both Scarborough High School and Bonny Eagle High School partnering with the Ford Driving Skills for Life program. All totaled, approximately two thousand (2,500) teens have been exposed to the *"Teen Driver Awareness Program"* and/or the Simulators and four hundred (400) adults have received presentations and information about the Program since September 2011.

The Bureau of Highway Safety is pleased to make the Program available and we hope that it will be successful in decreasing teen crashes and fatalities in the coming years.