

16 June 2014

Charlie Mitchell  
Reporter  
Fairfax Media  
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Dear Charlie

**Request made under the Official Information Act 1982**

Thank you for your email of 27 May 2014 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982, information on traffic crashes involving drivers on learner or restricted licences. As you will be aware, the Ministry of Transport transferred your request to the NZ Transport Agency to respond to.

I have responded to each of your questions below.

Please note:

- The data below includes crashes that occurred between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2013.
- It includes drivers who were either at prime fault or at part fault.

- 1. For each year from 1 January 2009, the number of car accidents (nationwide) causing injury in which a driver on a learner's licence was at fault.**

	Crash year					Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Driver on learner licence	967	822	675	622	659	3,745

- 2. For each year from 1 January 2009, the number of car accidents (nationwide) causing death in which a driver on a learner's licence was at fault.**

	Crash year					Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Driver on learner licence	32	23	11	8	13	87

3. For each year from 1 January 2009, the number of car accidents (nationwide) causing injury in which a driver on a restricted licence was at fault.

	Crash year					Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Driver on restricted licence	1,850	1,771	1,474	1,341	1,272	7,708

4. For each year from 1 January 2009, the number of car accidents (nationwide) causing death in which a driver on a restricted licence was at fault.

	Crash year					Total
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Driver on restricted licence	40	36	40	30	24	170

To give some context around the statistics it is worth noting that the period of greatest risk for a young driver is during the first 6-12 months of driving alone (on a restricted licence).

New Zealand has a graduated driver licensing system (GDLS) with three stages: learner, restricted and full. The aim is for drivers to progress through the GDLS until a full licence is obtained thereby demonstrating they have the skills and competence to drive safely. The required levels of supervision and restrictions reduce at each of the three stages in the licensing process. The New Zealand GDLS has been independently evaluated and found to be effective in reducing crash rates among new drivers. Since that evaluation, the GDLS has been strengthened through the raising of the driving age from 15 to 16 and the introduction of a more difficult restricted licence test.

The key condition of the learner licence is that a driver must have a supervisor sitting beside them in the front passenger seat at all times. The supervisor must have held a current New Zealand full driver's licence for at least two years. Because of this supervisory condition and the likelihood that learner drivers do the majority of their driving in less demanding conditions, they have the lowest casualty crash rates of all drivers.

The purpose of the restricted licence is to allow drivers to build experience without a supervisor. Restricted drivers are not allowed to drive between 10pm and 5am or carry passengers (with some exceptions) unless they have a supervisor with them. These conditions of the restricted licence are not random but based on a wealth of research and analysis. They specifically address the driving behaviours which most put young people at risk of crashing: carrying passengers (especially of a similar age) and driving unsupervised late at night.

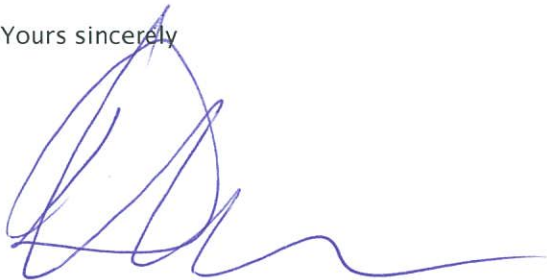
The Transport Agency has a number of initiatives to reduce the crash rates of drivers on a restricted licence. The *Practice* programme ([practice.co.nz](http://practice.co.nz)) encourages learner drivers to accumulate around 120 hours of supervised driving practice in a range of conditions and situations before they sit the restricted licence test. This programme is based on overseas research which found a 40 percent reduction in crashes for a cohort of drivers who completed an average of nearly 120 hours of supervised driving (compared to a cohort who completed an average of less than 50 hours) during drivers' first two years of solo driving. *Practice* supports the more difficult restricted licence entry test,

introduced in 2012, which was designed to require greater amounts of supervised driving experience for candidates than the previous restricted test.

Because the first 6-12 months of driving alone are the most risky for new drivers, the Transport Agency developed the safe teen driver advertising and education campaign ([www.safeteedriver.co.nz](http://www.safeteedriver.co.nz)) in 2011. The campaign encourages parents of teen drivers on restricted licences to stay involved in their teenagers' driving. The campaign focuses on giving parents practical tips about simple things they can do to reduce their teenage restricted driver's risk of crashing.

If you would like to discuss this reply with the Transport Agency, please contact Andy Knackstedt, National Media Manager, by email to [andrew.knackstedt@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:andrew.knackstedt@nzta.govt.nz) or by phone on (04) 894 6285.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dave Brash', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Dave Brash**  
Group Manager Planning and Investment  
For Chief Executive