



October 17, 2011

Dear Athletic Director:

With fall sports in full swing and the winter season just around the corner, we know you're extremely busy. So asking you to take a few moments to review a pamphlet and share it with your coaches might not be on the top of your priority list. But if the information outlined in this pamphlet could potentially save a student athlete's life, would that get your attention?

Car crashes are the number one killer of teens in New Jersey and nationwide. Two months ago, four members of the Mainland High School football team were killed and four others injured in a car crash on the Garden State Parkway. This news hit the Mainland community hard, teammates and friends were traveling from the high school to an annual end of camp team breakfast just a short drive away. This terrible tragedy, however, didn't have to happen.

The young man driving the car was violating the passenger restriction of the state's Graduated Driver License (GDL) program, which allows a teen holding a probationary license to transport just one person. This provision is important because when a teen driver has just one other friend in the car, the risk for being involved in a fatal crash doubles. The GDL program also requires teen drivers to be off the road between 11:01 p.m. and 5 a.m. (40% of teen fatal crashes happen after 9 p.m.), to always buckle up and not use cell phones or other hand-held or hands-free electronic devices. These provisions are important, because teens have the highest crash of any age group on the road -- a risk that doesn't decrease until they've been driving for at least 18-24 months.

We hope that you'll join with our respective organizations in honoring the memory of the young men lost at Mainland High School and the more than 700 other teens who have died in car crashes in New Jersey over the past decade by putting the "GDL game plan" into practice at your school. Ensuring that your students, as well as managers, parents and even fans, understand how and why the proven principles of GDL work is essential. And when everyone's as well-versed in the rules of the road as the rules of the game, it's sure to result not only in a winning season, but a safe season.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Timko
Executive Director
NJSIAA

Pamela (Pam) S. Fischer
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