

Script for Pod Cast

Subject: GDL – how and why it works.

Interviewer: Welcome to the DMVline, I'm Mike Goetzman. Today Patrick Fernan, DMV operations director, joins us to talk about Graduated Driver Licensing, also known by many as GDL.

Thanks for being with us today Patrick. I thought we could start the day by first defining what graduated driver licensing is and who's affected by it?

Patrick: Good question. Let me just give a little basic background information and then I can get into some more specifics. Graduated Driver Licensing or GDL, is what most people call it, is a process of getting new, young drivers into safer beginnings for their driving careers.

Interviewer: I've got a few key words here like new, young, drivers. Does GDL affect new, older drivers?

Patrick: No, it does not. Right now, GDL only applies to people between 15 ½ and 18 years of age.

Interviewer: Why just this age group?

Patrick: Well, there's a lot of good reasons, but in a nutshell, research and statistics consistently show that younger new drivers are more likely to be in crashes, more likely to have fatal crashes, especially, than any other age group. So, GDL was passed to save lives.

Interviewer: Does it really save lives?

Patrick: Yes, it does. Since the law went into effect, we can see GDL works. For 16 year olds, during the first three years after we passed the law, we saw that they were 15% less likely to get into a traffic crash, 18% less likely to be in a fatal crash, and 20% less likely to be in an injury crash that didn't involve a fatality. And overall, taking out injuries and fatalities, they're 12% less likely to be in property damage crashes.

Interviewer: That's a pretty impressive set of statistics. Especially, to see them happen so soon.

Patrick: Well, it's fantastic news, you can't argue with those numbers.

Interviewer: So, how does it work? How is it saving lives and reducing crashes?

Patrick: Well, GDL allows new drivers, like I said, between the ages of 15 1/2 and 18 to gain knowledge and driving experience while under the supervision of an experienced mentor. They progress gradually through these steps in graduated steps, hence, GDL.

Interviewer: So, what I'm hearing is that you are easing into driving over time.

Patrick: Yes, exactly. With more practice behind the wheel, and more supervision, a new young driver will be a **safer** new young driver.

Interviewer: OK, so when does someone start GDL?

Patrick: Well, if you meet all of the eligibility requirements, including being enrolled in a driver education program and having a sponsor, teens can get an Instruction Permit. We call that the "temp" sometimes. And they can get that when they turn 15 1/2. This permit, your "temp" license, allows you to practice driving with the supervision of an adult who has the appropriate qualifications like a parent or an instructor.

Interviewer: How long does someone hold an Instruction Permit? And how does that work?

Patrick: Under GDL, somebody under 18 who obtains an Instruction Permit has to have that for six months before applying for a Probationary License. They can't have any violations in the six months before applying for the Probationary License, and they have to get 30 hours of behind-the-wheel driving, including 10 at night.

Interviewer: So a young driver must practice at least 30 hours with the Instruction Permit, 10 of those hours at night, have an Instruction Permit for at least six months without committing any traffic violations in that time before applying for a Probationary License. Are there any restrictions with an instruction permit? I've heard that there is a limit to the number of people in the car.

Patrick: One of the really critical things for young drivers to operate safely is you have to limit the number of distractions. So with an instruction permit, somebody

under the age of 18 can only drive with a person who has had at least two years driving experience and has a regular valid driver's license; not probationary; not occupational, and the person sits in the front passenger seat. This person must be also either a qualified instructor 19 or older, and you can have up to three other people in the vehicle if it's got dual controls, so that's if you're in a class with other students; it could be a parent, legal guardian or spouse who's 19 years old or older. And then if you're an immediate family member, you can let them ride in the back seat. Or a person 21 or older. And this person must be designated in writing by your parent or legal guardian to accompany the teenage driver.

I should also mention that if the driver is at least 16 years of age, in addition to the licensed accompanying driver, one other licensed person 25 years of age or more with at least 2 years' of driving experience can occupy a seat other than the front seat.

Interviewer: So, the Instruction Permit is the first step, what happens after that?

Patrick: Well, the next step is the probationary license. So drivers under 18 can apply for a Probationary License by:

- Presenting proof that they completed a driver-ed course;
- They had their parent or sponsor sign and certify that they did the 30 hours of driving including 10 at night;
- They passed the vision and driving skills test; and
- They pay the fees.

Interviewer: So, this is not a regular driver's license, then?

Patrick: No, it's the next step towards getting a regular driver license.

Interviewer: Are there restrictions with a probationary license?

Patrick: Yes, drivers under 18 have some restrictions during the first 9 months after obtaining a Probationary License.

Interviewer: And what would those restrictions be?

Patrick: Well, it depends on the time of day or night, but the restrictions apply to the number and type of passengers that a teen driver can have.

So, between 5:00 a.m. and midnight, a teen can drive alone. Only one friend may be in the vehicle. Any number of immediate family members can also ride with the driver. In addition to this, a qualified instructor or someone over 21 with a valid regular license and two years of driving experience may also ride along.

Between midnight and 5:00 a.m., a teen may not drive alone unless it's between home and school or home and work. If going anywhere else, you have to have one of the following types of people seated in the front passenger seat: Either your parent or legal guardian, or a person with a valid, regular license, two years of driving experience and they're a qualified instructor or spouse 19 or older, or they're 21 year's of age or older – and only one person is allowed.

And the restrictions, they'll be extended 6 months for each occurrence if somebody gets convicted of a moving traffic violation, or violates any of the restrictions, or their license is suspended or revoked for any reason at all.

The time during the suspension or revocation does not count towards the nine months of restrictions.

Interviewer: Well, thanks for a lot of useful information, Patrick.

Patrick: You bet. Thank you.

Interviewer: This audio cast was produced by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Thanks for listening. This is Mike Goetzman.