

Idaho Driver Education Standards White Paper

Introduction

A driver's license represents considerable freedom to a young person. Parents may also eagerly look forward to the additional help that a teen driver provides to an American household. In addition, mobility is an important factor for today's teens and a key factor in the economic and social growth of our country. Teens view this mobility as evidence of becoming adults.

Unfortunately, these freedoms and conveniences come at a high price through traffic-related fatalities, life-altering injuries, and economic costs. Crashes continue to be the leading cause of death among American teens, accounting for more than one-third of all deaths of 15 to 20-year-olds. The crash rate is greatest among 16-year-olds, who tend to have the most limited driving experience and an immaturity that often results in risk-taking behind the wheel.

Since tracking began, novice teen drivers are over-represented in U.S. crash statistics and this trend continues today. The impact of these senseless tragedies on families and society are immeasurable. Driver education and training provides new drivers with the information, skills, and attitudes designed to produce safer drivers who are less likely to be involved in crashes. It is most often available to young people through public secondary schools and/or privately owned and operated commercial driving schools.

To address the issue, content standards provide a guide for Idaho driver education programs to provide quality and consistent education. The Idaho Driver Education Standards were published in 2009 and revised in 2017 and incorporate classroom and behind-the-wheel delivery standards. These standards were created to serve as the foundation for Idaho policies on driver education and training with the following understandings:

- The goals of driver education and training are to provide knowledge, develop skills, and influence the attitudes and behaviors of novice drivers.
- The overall objective is training novice drivers to perform as safe and competent drivers, thereby minimizing risk by contributing to the reduction of crashes, fatalities, and injuries.
- Driver education and training should be an integral component of a comprehensive Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system.
- Driver development should be a lifelong learning process.
- Driver education and training should be a phased educational process.
- Driver education and training standards may help an organization be successful in administering and/or providing quality and uniform driver education and training, consistent with the latest advances in methodology, subject matter, and technology.

The revised standards provide nine key areas:

1. Course overview and parent orientation
2. Vehicle awareness
3. Traffic Control

4. Vehicle Control
5. Controlling the area around your vehicle
6. The physics of driving
7. Driving environments
8. Cooperating with other roadway users
9. Being a responsible driver

The implementation of the resulting standards are intended to assist driver education and training professionals in providing the framework to teach novice teen drivers the skills and transfer the knowledge necessary to perform as safe and competent drivers, thereby contributing to the reduction of crashes, fatalities, and injuries.

Process

The original Idaho standards were developed in 2009 and revised in 2017 by a working group consisting of representatives from the driver education professional community with assistance from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to define the future of driver education and assist in improving the delivery of driver education programs.

The approach to developing these standards was as follows:

- Identify differences in the approaches currently used in Idaho and recommended National Standards to determine what modifications are needed to ensure uniformity and acceptance by public driver training programs.
- Assemble a working group consisting of program administrators and driver education and training specialists, both public and private, and other stakeholders to develop draft standards, guidelines, monitoring and evaluation approaches, and oversight techniques.
- Devise standards and guidelines for overseeing public driver education and training programs to ensure program quality upon delivery including monitoring and evaluation recommendations.

What Are Standards?

In general, a “Standard” is a written definition, program description, limit, or rule approved and monitored for compliance by an authoritative agency, professional, or recognized body as a minimum acceptable benchmark. Standards are an acknowledged measure of comparison for quantitative or qualitative value like a practice or product widely recognized or employed, especially because of its excellence. Standards may be classified as (1) mandatory and enforced by law or (2) voluntary and placed in public domain to encourage their widespread use. A standard is an agreed upon way of doing something based on the distilled wisdom of individuals with expertise in their subject matter and who know the needs of the organizations they represent and/or evaluate. Specific, strong, and measurable driver education standards are a tool to ensure students receive the level of information and experience necessary to properly prepare them for real world driving situations.

Content Standards

These Standards contain “What” content the driver education course should cover and “What” knowledge and skills development is expected. The content identifies “What” critical knowledge

and skills are taught in driver education courses to improve the overall quality of instructional content benefiting the novice learning driver.

Delivery Standards

Standards for “How” driver education is delivered are also critical to the new driver’s success by establishing criteria for “How” driver education is taught. These standards establish the process for “How” driver education is delivered in an effort to improve the overall quality of instructional methods which benefit the novice learning driver. These standards address the delivery methods for classroom, behind-the-wheel, and online instruction.

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