



## **Act 81 of 2011 FACT SHEET**

### **Changes Affecting Graduated Driver Licensing and Passenger Restraint Laws**

In an effort to enhance safety on Pennsylvania roads, Governor Corbett and the Legislature have agreed on changes to the Vehicle Code involving graduated driver licensing requirements, passenger restrictions for junior drivers and passenger restraint laws. The new rules in Act 81 of 2011 take effect on Dec. 24, 2011. The changes to the law were initiated to help junior drivers receive more comprehensive training, ease young driver distractions through limiting the number of passengers they may carry and improve general highway safety through improvements to passenger restraint laws.

#### **Changes to Junior Driver Training**

Act 81 increases supervised, behind-the-wheel skill building for learner's permit holders under 18 years of age from 50 hours to 65 hours. Ten of the added hours will consist of nighttime driving, while the other five additional hours must be driven in poor weather conditions.

Learner's permit holders who have taken their on the road driving skills test before the law's effective date of Dec. 24, 2011 only need to complete the present requirement of 50 hours of supervised training. However, learner's permit holders who have not passed the on the road driving skills test before Dec. 24, 2011 will have to meet the new requirement of 65 total hours of supervised skill building training – including the ten nighttime hours and five poor weather hours of driving - before they are authorized to take the driving skills portion of their driver's test to receive their junior license.

## **Changes to Junior Driver Passenger Restrictions**

Act 81 places increased restrictions on the number and age of passengers which a junior driver license holder may transport. Current law limits drivers under the age of 18 to transporting no more passengers than the number of seat belts in the vehicle.

As of Dec. 24, 2011, for the first six months after receiving their junior driver's license, a driver is not permitted to have more than one passenger under age 18 who is not an immediate family member (brother, sister, stepbrother, stepsister of the junior driver and adopted or foster children living in the same household as the junior driver) in their vehicle unless they are accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. If they have not been convicted of a driving violation or been partially or fully responsible for a reportable crash after six months, they may have up to three passengers under age 18 who are not immediate family members without a parent or legal guardian present. If they have any convictions or are partially or fully responsible for a reportable crash while a junior driver, they are once again restricted to one passenger.

## **Changes to Seat Belt Requirements**

Drivers and occupants in a vehicle who are under the age of 18 must wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt, and children under the age of eight must be securely fastened in a child restraint system. Failure to comply with the new law's seat belt provisions is a primary offense, meaning that a driver can be pulled over and cited solely for that violation.