



## NEWS RELEASE

### Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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### **BURSTEIN: MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES AMONG YOUNG DRIVERS REMAIN CAUSE FOR CONCERN**

*Rates Among Teens, Young Adults Are a Leading Cause of Death for 15 - 24 Age Group*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein today called attention to the incidence of motor vehicle crashes (“MVCs”) in metropolitan areas; although rates have declined in recent years, MVCs remain a leading cause of injury death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> According to a recent report issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), in 2009 a total of 34, 485 MVC deaths were reported among U.S. residents, and 22% of those who died were aged 15 – 24 years.

“Inexperience, lack of seat belt use, distracted driving, and alcohol-impaired driving are all well-known risk factors that contribute to a high death rate among young people,” **said Burstein**. “It’s more important than ever to make young drivers aware of the responsibilities they assume, as well as the hazards they may face, when they get behind the wheel.”

To assess patterns in MVC death rates for persons of all ages and for those aged 15 – 24 years, in recognition of the elevated risk for this age group, CDC used data from the National Vital Statistics System (“NVSS”) and the U.S. Census Bureau for 2009 representing the 50 most populous U.S. metropolitan statistical areas (“MSAs”). For persons aged 15 – 24 years, the MVC death rate was 13.0 per 100,000 residents for all MSAs combined (range 7.3 – 25.8), compared with a national rate of 17.3. The Buffalo/Niagara region reported 22 MVC deaths in this age group in 2009, a rate of 14.1 per 100,000. Although rates for the MSAs generally were lower than the rate for the nation as a whole, higher rates for persons aged 15 – 24 years were observed both in the MSAs and nationally.

“I urge all parents and caregivers to be as active and involved as they can be in helping young drivers gain experience on the road, supervising their practice and strengthening their confidence,” **added Burstein**. “Parents play a huge role in helping their teens gain experience; indeed, teens have been watching their parents drive for years. Organizations like the Automobile Association of America (“AAA”) provide a wealth of information to help parents and young drivers understand the

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>.

responsibilities and risks of driving, learn about New York State law and licensing, and acquire tools for better communication, including driving agreements.”

Additionally, effective interventions to reduce alcohol-impaired driving (such as sobriety checkpoints) benefit drivers of all ages, including young drivers who have disproportionately high rates of impaired driving and involvement in alcohol-related fatal MVCs.<sup>2,3</sup> Proven population-based interventions such as these offer the potential to further reduce MVC deaths among teens and young adults.

- For more information on the Erie County health department visit  
<http://www2.erie.gov/health/>
- For more information on the CDC and motor vehicle safety visit  
<http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/>
- For more information on AAA teen driving resources visit  
<http://teendriving.aaa.com/NY/>

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<sup>2</sup> CDC. Vital signs: alcohol-impaired driving among adults-United States, 2010. MMWR 2011; 60: 1351-6

<sup>3</sup> Task Force on Community Preventive Services. Motor vehicle-related injury prevention: reducing alcohol-impaired driving. Atlanta, GA: Task Force on Community Preventive Services; 2011. Available at <http://www.thecommunityguide.org/mvoi/aid/index.html>