



LOUISIANA HIGHWAY SAFETY COMMISSION NEWS RELEASE

January 16, 2026

Passengers have the right to speak up for safety

Monday is the start of National Passenger Safety Week, the perfect time to remind all motor vehicle passengers that they have the right to speak up if a driver is making poor safety choices.

National Passenger Safety Week is an initiative that encourages passengers to promote safety and prevent crashes by speaking up when witnessing dangerous driving behaviors. Unsafe driving puts everyone on the road at risk, and passengers should respectfully but directly point out bad practices, Louisiana Highway Safety Commission Executive Director Lisa Freeman said.

"If a driver is not paying attention to their driving, if they're speeding, or if they're impaired, that passenger absolutely has the right to be a back-seat driver," Freeman said. "In reality, back-seat drivers can be life savers by helping to prevent crashes."

Passengers also should let drivers know if they appear tired or sleepy while driving, Freeman said. According to a 2025 National Sleep Foundation survey, parents, commercial drivers, shift workers and teen drivers are at risk of driving without getting enough sleep.

"Drivers who are drowsy may not even be aware of their condition," Freeman said. "If your driver is yawning or appears drowsy, suggest that you share the driving and give the driver a chance to rest."

Speaking up is especially important for young passengers, who often ride with young drivers who are less experienced and less likely to have formed safe driving habits, Freeman said.

In 2024, 7,046 passengers under 21 were injured in crashes in Louisiana, according to data from the Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety at LSU. That represented 44.1% of all motor vehicle passenger injuries in Louisiana in 2024.

Freeman stressed that young drivers are strongly influenced by years of watching their parents or caregivers drive. The driving habits that children observe are likely to be the habits they develop as young drivers.

"Children are like sponges, and whatever driving behaviors they absorb are the ones they will hold onto later," Freeman said. "Always wear your seat belt, keep your eyes and attention on the road, and never drive if you're impaired in any way."

National Passenger Safety Week is a national initiative led by We Save Lives and The National Road Safety Foundation. The groups have developed an online pledge that passengers can submit or print and share.

For more information, contact:
Gregory Fischer
Public Information Officer
DPS – Louisiana Highway Safety Commission
Gregory.Fischer@la.gov
225-925-7858 (work)
225-489-1969 (mobile)