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Every state has its own transportation agency that handles driver’s licensing, so standardizing laws for new drivers isn’t as easy as it sounds – even if some safety advocates find the inconsistency alarming. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Many states enact tougher requirements for new drivers

Terry Collins
USA TODAY

A new wave of state laws is enforcing stricter requirements for new drivers, but states still can’t agree on how much practice is needed. • While most states have some form of graduated driver’s licensing laws, ranging from as low as 20 and as high as 70 supervised hours, more states are looking into adopting tougher mandates for young people, said Jonathan Adkins, CEO of the Governors Highway Safety Association, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit.

Florida, Washington and New Jersey tightened up requirements for new drivers in 2025, but even these new laws have inconsistent requirements. The new laws come as some traffic safety advocates say the United States would benefit from more uniform laws on the topic. “There should be a national law for teen drivers,” said Cheryl Giles, the longtime owner of Lakeland Atlantic Driving School in Winter Haven, Florida, which conducts about 1,000 student driving tests annually. “We desperately need some consistency.” Meanwhile, motor vehicle crashes continue to be among the leading causes of death for teens in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Teen drivers also face a disproportionately higher risk of crashes in comparison with older drivers, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports. “I would call it an epidemic right now, and we all

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“Whether you are in Virginia, Florida, Utah or even in the most rural parts of the country, the roads can be very dangerous places, especially when you don’t fully understand the dangers of driving.”

Tammy Gweedo McGee
Safe driving advocate

New Windsor man sentenced 20 years for sexually assaulting two children

Mike Randall
Middletown Times Herald- Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

A New Windsor man was sentenced Aug. 14 to 20 years in state prison after he previously pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting two children. Orange County District Attorney David Hoovler said Kevin Cholula, 31, of New Windsor, was also sentenced to 10 years of post-release supervision. He also will be registered as a sex of-

fender. Cholula pleaded guilty earlier this year to two counts of first-degree course of sexual conduct against a child, a felony. At his plea proceeding, Cholula admitted that between July 2020 and October 2023, he engaged in two or more acts of sexual conduct, which included at least one act of sexual intercourse, oral sexual conduct, anal sexual conduct or aggravated sexual contact with two children less than 11 years old.

“There is no punishment short of a lengthy prison sentence that is acceptable for the admitted conduct of this defendant,” Hoovler said in a statement released by his office. “Our community will be safer while this offender spends the next two decades in prison.” The name of Cholula’s attorney was not immediately available. Mike Randall covers breaking news for the Times Herald-Record and the Poughkeepsie Journal. Reach him at mrandall@th-record.com.

Central Hudson announces 3-year rate increases

Nickie Hayes
Poughkeepsie Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Central Hudson Gas & Electric announced on Aug. 14 a three-year rate increase plan will be implemented starting Sept. 1 for some ratepayers. The New York Public Service Commission approved the rate increase, which Central Hudson said in a statement is “modest” for many of their customers, while providing savings for low-income households. Earlier on Aug. 14, the New York Public Service Commission announced Central Hudson would pay \$5 million in a settlement over a 2023 gas explosion in Wappingers Falls. Under the new Sept. 1 rate plan, the typical Central Hudson electric customer will see a total bill increase of 3.12%, equating to an additional \$5.43 per month in the first year. The typical natural gas customer will see a total bill increase of 5.19%, equating to \$7.73 per month for the first year. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said while the commission worked hard to lower the “outrageously high” initial rate proposals, “it’s still not enough.” “I have been crystal clear that

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DA says man lured stabbing victim with dating app

Mike Randall
Middletown Times Herald- Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Middletown man was arraigned Aug. 14 on an indictment charging him with attempted murder for a stabbing that took place earlier in the month. Orange County District Attorney David Hoovler said Reggie Florence, 28, of Middletown, was charged with attempted second-degree murder and two counts of first-degree assault, both felonies. The stabbing is alleged to have occurred on Aug. 3 in the City of Middletown. According to documents filed and statements made in court, Florence began to communicate with the victim, whom police did not identify, on a dating app on the day of the attack. Soon after, Florence allegedly lured the victim to his residence in Middletown, where he offered to give the

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