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Erie Times-News

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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

Erie bishop starts audit

Says diocese to offer refunds in car raffle

Ed Palattella
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ticketholders in the 2024 Corvette raffle at St. Jude the Apostle Church never had a fair chance of winning. But they can expect to get their money back. As the Catholic Diocese of Erie sorts through the aftermath of the botched

raffle, in which the now-former pastor at St. Jude told investigators he made up the name of the grand-prize winner, the diocese said St. Jude will refund those who bought \$50 tickets to win the Corvette or \$50,000 in cash, Bishop Lawrence T. Persico said.

Persico also said St. Jude, at the request of the diocese, is undertaking a forensic audit of the raffle and the other finances at St. Jude since July 2022, when the Rev. Ross R. Miceli started as pastor. Miceli ran the annual car raffles and had

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A 2024 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray 1LT sports car sits outside a garage at St. Jude the Apostle Church in Millcreek Township on Aug. 12. ED PALATTELLA/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Lawsuit settled in 2019 fire

House blaze took the lives of five children

Ed Palattella
Erie Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nearly six years to the day that five children were killed in a fire at an Erie residential day care, a confidential settlement has ended a lawsuit that the victims' parents filed over their deaths.

The suit centered on claims related to an oscillating fan and an extension cord that the plaintiffs linked to the blaze.

The settlement was approved on Aug. 12 and filed under seal in Erie County Common Pleas Court, but the amount is believed to be in the tens of millions of dollars.

The fire broke out on Aug. 11, 2019. It was reported at 1:12 a.m. in a single-family residence at 1248 W. 11th St. that housed the Harris Family Daycare. The five children who died were staying at the day care overnight.

Four of the children were siblings: La'Myhia Jones, 8; Luther Jones Jr., 6; Ava Jones, 4; and Jayden Augustyniak, 9 months. The other child who died was Davlin Pacley, 2.

The plaintiffs were Shevona Overton and Luther Jones Sr. and Karina Facchiano. Overton and Jones sued as the parents of the three Jones children. Overton also sued as the parent of Jayden Augustyniak. Facchiano

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