



Media release

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Crash course in safe driving for Selwyn teens

Selwyn teenagers were given the chance to take the wheel and practise their driving skills last week at Ruapuna Raceway.

Leading Learners workshops are held most school holidays, giving secondary students practical tips on improving their driving skills and knowledge while working towards obtaining a restricted driver's license.

The full-day course is for students with a learner's license and includes a variety of activities to learn about emergency braking, driving on different road surfaces, managing distractions, low speed manoeuvres and basic vehicle maintenance. The course is a combination of practical and theory based workshops but most involve being in a vehicle with the qualified instructors who teach the course. The course is funded by Selwyn District Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency.

17-year old Tayla Clark from Ellesmere College has been on her learner's license for almost a year and attended the Leading Learners course to improve her driving. Tayla says she especially enjoyed learning about coping with peer pressure, hazards and risk awareness.

"People tend to think young drivers are bad drivers, but most of us just need experience and someone to guide us. This course was great as it gave me the opportunity to learn from qualified instructors and practise their skills in a controlled environment."

Parents are also encouraged to attend the course to learn how they can be good driving coaches.

"It was great having mum there and since finishing the course we've already been out for a drive to test my new skills. I found I was much more aware of what was happening around me and how important it is to be make good decisions, especially at intersections," says Tayla.

"It's amazing the things I've picked up and am now putting into practise. Now I'm looking forward to getting my restricted license after exams," she adds.

Over the past five years young drivers aged between 15 and 24 have been involved in more than 180 crashes in the Selwyn District resulting in injuries, including 11 fatalities and 61 serious injuries.

"Nationally, restricted drivers are at greater risk of being in a serious crash in the first six to 12 months of driving solo than at any other time in their lives and this is partly due to driving inexperience," says Selwyn District Council's Road Safety Co-ordinator Ngaire Tinning.

"Driving on the open road can be challenging so it's important we continue to provide opportunities for young people to improve their driving skills and knowledge in a safe and enjoyable environment."

Leading Learners programmes are held most school holidays and over the past three years they have been extremely popular with more than 300 participants completing the course.

Another course will be held early next year. For more information contact Ngaire on 347 2901 or email ngaire.tinning@selwyn.govt.nz.

Ends

Photos attached:

- (1) Christopher Sutton of Lincoln and driving instructor Tony Green discuss safe stopping distances while using the driving simulator
- (2) Driving instructor

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