New Mexico DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Michelle Lujan Grisham, Governor
Michael R. Sandoval, *Cabinet Secretary*

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Driver education updates

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Transportation Traffic Safety Division (NMDOT TSD) is working with driving schools across the state to complete driver education training while adhering to health and safety orders.

"The pandemic has forced a lot of families and driving schools to suspend driver education courses," said Transportation Secretary Mike Sandoval. "Getting a license has also been an issue because students couldn't complete their in-person driving instruction or make an appointment to test with the MVD offices to attain their licenses," adds Sandoval. "Now that students can resume one-on one driving instruction, they can progress through the Graduated Driver Licensing system."

The NMDOT's Traffic Safety Division (TSD) oversees all driver education programs statewide. All teens under the age of 18 must complete one of three programs to obtain a driver permit and license in New Mexico.

- Teens may complete 30 hours of classroom instruction with seven hours of behind the wheel training with a certified instructor. This format is offered by private driving schools.
- Complete 56 hours of classroom instruction. These are high school elective courses.
- Complete 56 hours of NMDOT-approved correspondence education through a home-based program and students must apply for permission prior to enrollment.

The department has directed all driving schools to follow current emergency public health orders and COVID-19 safe practices and guidance. High schools are providing a hybrid model of in-person instruction and virtual learning or complete virtual instruction.

Private driving schools are conducting in-person, classroom learning at 25 percent capacity using Covid-19 safe practices. Some schools are also offering the 30-hour classroom requirement through a web-based training platform in an effort to keep students and instructors safe.

The Behind-the-wheel training was suspended on Nov. 16, 2020 for the safety of the students and instructors which caused delays for completing the entire driver education program. Based on review of COVID-safe practices, effective Jan. 9, 2021, TSD approved schools to resume the driving portion of the program at a one-to-one student-teacher ratio while following COVID-19 safety protocols.

The Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) has provided approval for some licensed driver education schools to test students and submit scores to MVD offices, eliminating the need for students to schedule their written and road test with MVD offices.

For additional information about the driver education program, please contact the NMDOT Traffic Safety Division at (800) 541-7952.

For information and a list of all approved private driver education schools, visit: http://transportation.unm.edu/transportation/driver-education-students-parents/

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