

## **April 2021- National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**

*A note from the author—*

*Happy Spring NCP friends! This month, I wanted to revisit a subject that we have not addressed in a while... safe driving. With the weather changing, COVID vaccinations on the rise, and more and more business "opening up", more and more people are out and about at this time of year, especially on the roads.*

*I am sure that we are all familiar with the cell phone ban while driving, especially the focus on eliminating texting while driving. We see the commercials, the advertisements in publications, the billboards, and the state- issued signs. Many of us know someone that has lost a friend or family member in a vehicle collision, possibly related directly to cell phone usage. Maybe you have changed your ways and only talk on the phone while driving if you are using your blue tooth. Maybe you "only text at stop lights." Maybe you use speaker phone to ensure "hands free driving." However, although you are following the "hands free driving" campaign, you are still being distracted while driving, which means that you are still putting yourself, your passengers, and others on the road at risk. I ask you to read the information below to learn more about the definition of distracted driving, the impact distracted driving has on the community, and ways you can make the roads safer for your family.*



### **What is Distracted Driving Awareness Month?**

On March 24, 2010, advocates for Cell-Free Driving announced its support of U.S. House of Representative passage of a resolution ([H. Res. 1186](#)) that designated April as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The resolution, passed on March 23, 2010 by a 410-2 vote, urged Americans to consider the lives of others on the road and put an end to distracted driving.

Rep. Betsy Markey (D-CO) introduced H. Res. 1186 to encourage others to stop driving distracted, particularly on a cell phone. The resolution also supported FocusDriven's efforts in this initiative and mentioned 9-year-old Erica Forney, who was struck and killed by a distracted driver in Fort Collins, CO, in November 2008.

FocusDriven is a nonprofit organization that advocates for Cell-Free Driving ([focusdriven.org](http://focusdriven.org)) and for victims of motor vehicle crashes involving drivers using cell phones. FocusDriven supports victims of cell phone distracted driving and families of victims. Its goal is to increase public awareness on the dangers of cell phone distracted driving by putting a human face on the disastrous impact of the behavior, in order to promote corresponding public policies, programs and personal responsibility.



### **The Ongoing Epidemic of Distracted Driving**

You may ask, why are we STILL hearing about cell phone usage while driving after all of these laws have been passed? The information provided below helps to answer this question and is from an article released by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 2013, entitled "NHTSA Survey Finds

660,000 Drivers Using Cell Phones or Manipulating Electronic Devices While Driving At Any Given Daylight Moment."

To answer the above question, the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released new survey results that show that Americans continue to use electronic devices while driving, despite warnings that it causes their own driving to deteriorate and can lead to crashes, injuries and even death.

Today's 2011 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) showed that at any given daylight moment across America, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving, a number that has held steady since 2010. According to separate NHTSA data, more than 3,300 people were killed in 2011 and 387,000 were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver.

"Distracted driving is a serious and deadly epidemic on America's roadways," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "There is no way to text and drive safely. Powering down your cell phone when you're behind the wheel can save lives – maybe even your own."

So far 39 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands ban text messaging for all drivers. Also 10 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while driving.

"Many drivers see distracted driving as risky when other drivers do it, but do not recognize how their own driving deteriorates," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "I urge all motorists to use common sense and keep their attention focused solely on the task of safely driving."

More than 6,000 respondents age 16 and older were interviewed by phone for the National Survey on Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors. Almost half of drivers said they answer an incoming call and one in four drivers are willing to place a call on all, most, or some trips. Slightly fewer are willing to make a call while driving compared to 2010 (28% to 24%), but there is little if any change in those who answer a call while driving (52% to 49%). Considering that in 2011 there were almost 212 million licensed drivers in the America, about 102 million drivers were answering calls and 50 million drivers were placing calls while driving.

To prevent distracted driving, the Department of Transportation recommends that drivers:

- Turn off electronic devices and put them out of reach before starting to drive.
- Be good role models for young drivers and set a good example. Talk with your teens about responsible driving.
- Speak up when you are a passenger and your driver uses an electronic device while driving. Offer to make the call for the driver, so his or her full attention stays on the driving task.
- Always wear your seat belt. Seat belts are the best defense against other unsafe drivers.



### **What IS Distracted Driving?**

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. *All* distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

Distracted driving is anything that takes your eyes or mind off the road or your hands off the steering wheel - especially texting and cell phone use, whether hands-free or handheld. Who's doing it? Most of us. It has been estimated that, at any one time, over 10 percent of drivers are using a mobile device.

A ticket for \$159 for texting or talking on a cell phone is a major distraction to your wallet.

You may ask, since distracted driving entails all of the above activities (and more), why is there such a focus on legislation surrounding only cell phone use and texting while driving? Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.

The best way to end distracted driving is to educate all Americans about the danger it poses. If you don't already think distracted driving is a safety problem, please take a moment to learn more. Together, we can help save lives.

### **The Facts About Distracted Driving**

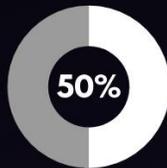
There are plenty of facts, figures and details about distracted driving, but let's get the plain and simple ones on the table first:

- 80 percent of vehicle crashes involve some sort of driver inattention.
- Up to 6000 people nationwide are killed in crashes where driver distractions are involved.
- Talking on a cell phone or texting is the number one source of driver distractions.
- Texting takes your eyes off the road for an average of five seconds, far enough to travel the length of a football field at 55 mph. Most crashes happen with less than 3 seconds reaction time.
- The act of talking on a cell phone, even hands free, can give you "inattention blindness," where your brain isn't seeing what's right in front of you. You aren't even aware that you are driving impaired. If you think you can handle both driving and talking on a cell phone or texting, you are kidding yourself and putting us all at risk.

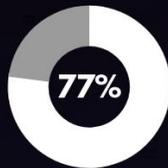
DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH

**IN 2017, 3,166  
PEOPLE IN THE U.S.  
WERE KILLED DUE TO  
DISTRACTED DRIVERS.**

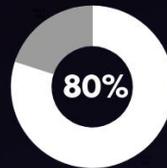
**1 IN 5**  
Texas crashes  
involve distracted  
driving.



Drivers on hands-free or handheld devices can fail to see 50% of their surroundings



77% of drivers make or take phone calls while driving.



80% of drivers mistakenly think hands-free devices are safer than handheld

**ITS NOT JUST THE PHONE**



Having pets in your vehicles, eating and drinking, adjusting the radio or searching for music, applying makeup, and changing the climate in your vehicle can all distract the driver from focusing on the road.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO?**



**Turn off notifications**

Set your phone to "Do Not Disturb" while driving



**Speak up**

Over half of drivers say they would stop distracted driving if asked by a passenger.



**Slow down!**

In addition to distracted driving, speeding is still one of the main causes of accidents. Increases in speed limits over two decades have cost 33,000 lives in the U.S

ICT and its members companies want all drivers to be safe on the over 300,000 miles of roads in Texas.

For more safe driving resources, visit [insurancecouncil.org/distracteddriving](http://insurancecouncil.org/distracteddriving)

**ICT**  
INSURANCE  
COUNCIL  
OF TEXAS

## **What Makes Cell Phone Use While Driving Dangerous?**

Cell phone use has grown dramatically in recently years. In 1995, cell phone subscriptions covered only 11% of the United States population; in 2010, that number grew to 93%. This has led to a substantial increase in cell phone use while driving and distracted driving-related deaths.

At any one time, 9% of drivers are talking on cell phones, making them 4 times as likely to crash. Talking on a cell phone while driving requires the brain to multitask—a process it cannot do safely while driving. While a growing number of drivers are turning to hands-free devices, studies show hands-free devices provide no safety benefit. The area of the brain responsible for processing moving visual information—a vital part of driving—has 37% less capacity to gather and process critical driving data and instead focuses on the cell phone conversation. It's the conversation, not the device, that creates the danger.

Almost 70% of the respondents to the 2010 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety survey reported talking on a cell phone while driving in the previous 30 days, yet nearly 2 in 3 drivers say that drivers talking on cell phones are a threat to their personal safety. People realize that talking on a cell phone while driving is a dangerous behavior, but they continue to engage in this behavior.

We can all help put an end to this deadly problem by not to driving while using a cell phone and encouraging others to do the same. This simple commitment will save lives and create a safer environment for us all.

## **Just Drive**

### **Common Distracted Driving Activities**



- ⊘ texting**
- ⊘ checking social media**
- ⊘ eating and drinking**
- ⊘ grooming**
- ⊘ adjusting the radio**

### **Distracted Driving Awareness Month**

## **Texting and Driving- The Truth**

Texting has increasingly become the way many people communicate. American teens send and receive an average of 3,300 text messages per month—more than 6 texts every hour they are awake. Sending text or email messages while driving is extremely dangerous, as it draws a driver's eyes, mind and hands away from the road.

On average, texting causes drivers to look away from the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, the vehicle travels the length of an entire football field - including both end zones - while the driver isn't looking.

Drivers texting while driving not only display slower reaction times and have difficulty staying in their lane, but also are less likely to see:

- High and low relevant objects
- Visual cues
- Exits, red lights and stop signs

Drivers using cell phones behind the wheel miss half of the information in their driving environment. Texting while driving increases your chances of a crash by up to 8 to 23 times.

Drivers who type or read text messages contribute to at least 100,000 crashes each year, leading to thousands of preventable deaths. Take the pledge today to stay cell free while on the road so you are not responsible for the senseless death of another human being. No text is worth a life.



## **The Age of Smart Phones—the Problem Gets BIGGER**

With the increasing market for “smart phones”, the epidemic of cell phone use while driving has only grown. Since the age of cell phone use has obtained such popularity, researchers and politicians have focused on talking on the phone and texting while driving as key components contributing to car accidents. However, with the onset of smart phones increasing the versatility of our gadgets, we have become even more distracted by our electronic devices in general, but especially while driving.

Although cell phone use is commonly thought of as talking and texting, the following are other distractions contributing to the problem:

- Dialing a phone number
- Using email, Facebook and Twitter
- Plugging a phone into a charger
- Playing a game
- Downloading or using apps
- Surfing the web
- General manipulation of the phone
- Playing music

These are more reasons why FocusDriven, along with many other organizations and groups advocating for safe driving, calls for a total ban on cell phone use. All of these actions are dangerous, and as technology continues to evolve more distractions will emerge. Get involved today by implementing and supporting:

- Cell phone distracted driving legislation
- Corporate cell phone bans
- Public education
- High-visibility law enforcement
- Safe driving technology



## **The Most High-Risk Group—Protecting your Kids**

Motor-vehicle crashes are the number one killer of teens in America; almost half of teens killed in crashes are the driver themselves.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) started a campaign in October 2013 that challenges parents to discuss five critical driving practices with their teenage drivers that can have the greatest beneficial impacts in the event of a crash. The new "5 to Drive" campaign was launched to coincide with National Teen Driver Safety Week, October 20-26, 2013. The following information is from the U.S. Department of Transportation's report released in October 2012 entitled "NHTSA Unveils '5 to Drive' Teen Safety Campaign To Reduce High Death Rate of Teens".

"Safety is our highest priority, especially when it comes to teens, who are often our least experienced drivers," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "The '5 to Drive' campaign gives parents and teens a simple, straightforward checklist that can help them talk about good driving skills and most importantly, prevent a tragedy before it happens."

NHTSA data show motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers 14-18 years-old in the United States. In 2011, 2,105 teen drivers were involved in fatal crashes. Of those teens involved in fatal crashes, 1,163 (55 percent) survived, and 942 (45 percent) died in the crash.

The "5 to Drive" campaign encourages parents to visit [www.safercar.gov/parents/teendriving](http://www.safercar.gov/parents/teendriving) and discuss with their teens one safety topic each day during national teen driver safety week. The "5 to Drive" campaign topics are:

1. No cell phone use or texting while driving,
2. No extra passengers,
3. No speeding,
4. No alcohol, and
5. No driving or riding without a seat belt.

The list is designed to counteract poor driving decisions that have contributed heavily to the high death rate among teen drivers, as evidenced by:

- In 2011, over half of the teen occupants of passenger vehicles who died in crashes were unrestrained;
- Speeding was a factor in 35 percent of fatal crashes involving a teen driver;
- Twelve percent of teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were distracted at the time; and

- In 2011, 505 people nationwide died in crashes in which drivers between 14 and 18 years old had alcohol in their systems, despite the fact that all states have Zero Tolerance Laws for drinking and driving under age 21.

Peer pressure is also a contributing factor in teen crash deaths. When the teen driver in a fatal crash was unrestrained, almost four-fifths of that driver's teen passengers were unrestrained as well. Moreover, one NHTSA study found that a teenage driver was 2.5 times more likely to engage in risky behaviors when driving with one teenage passenger and three times more likely with multiple teenager passengers.

"Inexperience and immaturity, combined with speed, drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts, distracted driving, and other teen passengers contribute to the high fatality rate of teens involved in fatal crashes," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "I encourage all parents of teenagers to have an open discussion with their teen about the dangers common among young drivers and to make sure they use our '5 To Drive' program to develop the necessary skills to drive safely every trip, every time."

Poor decisions among teen drivers can lead to crashes and fatalities at any time of the day, but fatal teen driver crashes are most frequent between 3 and 8 p.m., and remain high until midnight.

### **Ways to Decrease Your Chances of Driving Distracted**

What can you do? Most important, obey the law. It's there for a reason. Also, do your best to eliminate distractions:

- Never text and drive
- Turn off your phone when you get behind the wheel
- Don't text or call someone when you know they are likely to be driving
- Make a pact with your family, spouse, and caregivers never to use the phone with kids in the car
- No eating or drinking while driving
- Don't program your GPS, MP3 player or other devices while driving
- Pull over and stop to read maps
- No grooming

- No reading
- No watching videos
- Try not to get too involved with passengers
- If something falls to the floor, pull over before trying to reach it

# DISTRACTED DRIVING *know the facts*

STOP, PAY ATTENTION

Distracted driving is **any activity** that could divert a **person's attention** away from the primary task of **driving**.

THERE ARE **3** MAIN TYPES OF *distraction*

**visual**

taking your eyes off the road

**manual**

taking your hands off the wheel

**cognitive**

taking your mind off what you are doing

POTENTIAL DISTRACTIONS WHILE DRIVING

## **What Can You Do to Promote Safe Driving?**

Thousands die needlessly each year because people continue to use their cell phones while driving, handheld or hands-free. Join the National Safety Council this April in urging those you care about to:

- Stop using cell phones while driving
- Recognize that hands-free devices offer no safety benefit
- Understand the dangers of the cognitive distraction to the brain
- Tell others about the dangers of cell phone distracted driving

How you can get involved

Take the pledge to drive cell free. The fight to end distracted driving starts with you. Make the commitment to drive phone-free today.

Here's the PLEDGE:

Distracted driving kills and injures thousands of people each year. I pledge to:

Protect lives by never texting or talking on the phone while driving.

Be a good passenger and speak out if the driver in my car is distracted.

Encourage my friends and family to drive phone-free.

Share information about Distracted Driving by sharing this Health Ministry page and using the resources at the bottom of this page to explore more!

Download more information from reliable online resources regarding 2014 campaign materials found here:

[http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/2014\\_Distracted\\_Driving\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/2014_Distracted_Driving_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

[http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/INWI\\_TipCardHIGHRES\\_PDF\\_2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/INWI_TipCardHIGHRES_PDF_2011_FINAL.pdf)

[http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/INWI\\_PledgeCard%202011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ots.ca.gov/pdf/campaign/INWI_PledgeCard%202011_FINAL.pdf)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/distracted\\_driving.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/distracted_driving.aspx)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/CognitiveDistraction.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/CognitiveDistraction.aspx)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Documents/NSC\\_CorpLiability-WP\\_Ir.pdf](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Documents/NSC_CorpLiability-WP_Ir.pdf)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Documents/DDAM%202014/900004090\\_2014%20DDAM%20Public%20Fact%20Sheet\\_FNL.pdf](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Documents/DDAM%202014/900004090_2014%20DDAM%20Public%20Fact%20Sheet_FNL.pdf)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/Driving-Down-Distraction.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/Driving-Down-Distraction.aspx)

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/Cell-Phone-Crash-Data.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/Cell-Phone-Crash-Data.aspx)  
<http://www.focusdriven.org/content.asp?tid=74>

Watch distracted driving videos this month and/ or share them with friends, family, the community, etc.! Here are links to some videos:

[http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media\\_and\\_Research/campaigns/Distracted\\_Driving.asp#video](http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/campaigns/Distracted_Driving.asp#video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVce-DFgwQE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQcaef8Pcjk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKCh4BHvXSQ&list=PL337F74DED367FDE7&index=1>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7VQcB5JmVs>

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoTWdh6WdyZLGz9Bdl0qBZRhSr4MFIPq&feature=view\\_all](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvoTWdh6WdyZLGz9Bdl0qBZRhSr4MFIPq&feature=view_all)

**“It Was Just...”**

**It was just a quick call**

**It was just a short trip**

**It was just one drink**

**It was just a picture**

**It was just an email**

**It was just a glance**

**It was just a text**

**It was just a bite**

**‘Just’ is all  
it takes**

**DISTRACTED  
DRIVING  
AWARENESS  
MONTH**

## **How Are You Going to Celebrate National Distracted Driving Awareness Month?**

Throughout April, the National Safety Council and FocusDriven will urge Americans to consider the lives of others on the road and stop using cell phones while driving. NSC estimates 28 percent of all crashes – or 1.6 million crashes – each year are caused by drivers using their handheld or hands-free cell phones and texting while driving. This is much greater than the number of crashes caused by any other distraction.

Both nonprofit organizations encourage drivers to commit to not using their cell phones while driving during the month of April and beyond. They suggest drivers silence, turn off or put their phones away in trunks or glove compartments, reducing the temptation to answer a ringing phone, text message or e-mail. Drivers also are asked to change their voicemail greeting to alert callers they may be driving.



**Don't drive intoxicated.  
Don't drive intexticated.**

**A sobering message from AAA**

### **Resources:**

<http://www.focusdriven.org/dangers-of-conversation>

<http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/CAMPAIGNS/Distracted+Driving/One+Text+or+Call+Could+Wreck+It+All>

[http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/DDAM.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/DDAM.aspx)

<http://www.distraction.gov/content/press-release/2013/10-22.html>

<http://www.safetylane.org/?p=2597>

[http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media\\_and\\_Research/campaigns/Distracted\\_Driving.asp](http://www.ots.ca.gov/Media_and_Research/campaigns/Distracted_Driving.asp)

<http://www.distraction.gov/content/press-release/2013/04-05.html>

<http://www.focusdriven.org/content.asp?tid=37>