

*Texting
While
Driving --
Another
Kind of
Impairment*



Texting While Driving Is Hazardous

- Driving skill is measurably impaired by text-messaging.
- Writing text messages creates a significantly greater impairment than reading text messages, but both are harmful



Driver Causes Fatal Wreck While Texting On Cellphone

Posted by: in World news

Text Messaging Teen Blamed In Fatal Wreck

Peoria police said they believe a fatal accident was caused by a teenager who was text messaging on her cell phone and let her car drift into oncoming traffic, reported KPHO in Phoenix.
Full Story: NBC 10 Philadelphia

Text Messaging to Blame in Teen's Car Wreck?

BY TIM STEVENS, POSTED JUL 16TH 2007 AT 4:07PM

Texting banned on California trains after deadly crash

Text Messaging An Increasing Cause of Auto Accidents

March 05, 2008 - 08:04 AM

STATE NEWS

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Parents of injured toddler believe text-messaging caused wreck

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Dec 4, 2008 09:49 AM EST



Texting Drivers in the News

- A 17-year-old texting driver in New York state swerved into oncoming traffic and hit a truck head-on, killing herself and her four passengers.
- A texting California train engineer was involved in the collision near Los Angeles that killed 25 passengers and injured 130 others.
- A 27-year-old Arkansas texting driver crashed his vehicle into another car, killing its driver (the Arkansas man was charged with negligent homicide, and had been also drinking a beer at the time).



Texting Drivers in the News, cont.

- An 18-year-old texting driver in Texas slammed full-speed into a stopped vehicle, sending a 3-year-old passenger in that vehicle to the ICU at a local hospital with a broken skull.
- A 16-year-old texting driver in California lost control and dies in the ensuing crash (she was also speeding and had been drinking).



What Studies Show About Texting

- Driver inattention is involved in about 80 percent of crashes (*NHTSA, 2006*)
- 46 percent of teenagers text while driving (*AAA*)
- 91% of Americans think that it's unsafe to text message while driving and that it's just as bad as driving after a couple of drinks (*Harris Poll, August 2007*)



What Studies Show About Cell Phones

- Drivers talking on their cell phones were 18 percent slower braking than other motorists (*University of Utah, 2005*)
- Talking on a cell phone while driving caused impairment on par with driving with a blood-alcohol level of 0.08 percent (*University of Utah*)



What a Recent Study Assessed

- Impact of text messaging on driver performance
- Attitudes and beliefs that surrounded the activity in the 17-25 age category
- Study done by the Transport Research Laboratory in September 2008.



How the Study Worked

- Studied reaction times, car-following ability, lane control, and driver speed
- Used a driving simulator
- 8 male, 9 female participants between the ages of 17-24.
- All described themselves as regular users of text messaging and used phones with standard key pads.



The Test Drives

- Participants took a 10-minute familiarization drive. Had to follow a lead vehicle at a safe distance.
- On the next test drive, they had to read a text message, and compose and send a message.
- The third drive was without distractions.



What Texting Drivers Did Wrong

While driving and texting, drivers:

- failed to detect hazards,
- responded to hazards more slowly, and
- were exposed to risk for longer periods.



Negative Affects

- Less able to keep a constant distance behind lead vehicle
- Large increases in variability of lane position
- Many more lane departures
- In actual traffic, these driving errors dramatically increase the likelihood of collision.



Dangerously Slowed Reaction Times

- Reaction times are slower when reading or writing a message.
- Reaction time for drivers trying to compose a text message increased from 1.2 to 1.6 seconds.
- At highway speeds, drivers can travel more than a mile while texting.



Slowed Reaction Times, cont.

- Slower reaction times result in an increased stopping distance of three car lengths.
- Could easily make the difference between causing and avoiding an accident or between a fatal and non-fatal collision.



What Causes This Impairment?

- Increased mental workload required to write a text message
- Less physical control caused by holding the phone
- Visual impairment caused by continually looking back and forth from the phone display and the road ahead



Worse than Drinking, Smoking Pot

- Reaction-time impairment caused by texting while driving was apparently greater than that caused by:
 - drinking alcohol to the legal limit for driving
 - smoking pot
 - talking on a hands-free phone.
- Compared to three earlier TRL studies



Who Texts and Drives?

- In 2008, 2,002 members of the social networking website Facebook were asked to self-report whether they text while driving.
- 45% admitted doing so.



Is Gender a Factor?

- Impairment caused by texting was far more significant for female rather than male drivers.
- However, male drivers are more likely to text and drive.
- As a result, overall impairment across the sexes may be more equal.



Solutions

- Don't get into the habit of texting and driving.
- If you already do it, stop. Pull over if you have urgent business or an emergency.
- Don't ride with drivers who are texting. Tell them to stop.
- Concentrate on traffic and other drivers while you are behind the wheel.

