

Facts about Distracted Driving

We all know texting and driving is a recipe for disaster but what about the use of cell phones when driving? 81% of drivers use a cell phone when driving. At any given time 9% of drivers are speaking on a cell phone.

How dangerous is cell phone distraction? 21% to 25% of all crashes involve a distracted driver. 3,331 deaths and 387,000 injuries occurred in 2011 due to distracted driving. Your crash risk increases four times when talking on the phone; the rate equal to that of a drunken driver at 0.10 BAC. Why is that?

The spoken language is especially distracting. Auditory tasks take precedent over visual tasks. This processing is automatic and it can't be turned off or ignored. Language processing takes precedent when performing concurrent tasks. There's a 37% decrease in pariental brain lobe activity when listening. The parietal lobe integrates sensory information from various parts of the body.

"But my car has a "hands-free" system. Isn't that just as safe?" How about "hands-free" voice-activation systems? Hands-free voice-activated systems reduce visual (eyes on) distractions and mechanical (hands-on) distractions but do not reduce cognitive (mind on) distractions. Again, speaking and listening takes precedence in the brain over other tasks. Reaction times are virtually the same between hands-free and handheld cell phone usage when driving.

Studies indicate braking distances at 70 mph are worse for those on cell phones versus those with the 0.1 blood-alcohol content (BAC) (normal reaction 102 feet, alcohol affected 114 feet, cell phone use 148 feet). That extra 46 feet may be the difference between avoiding a collision or participating in a tragedy.

Studies show drivers using cell phones will increase their following distance but have a significant drop in reaction time, braking time, with a significant increase in rear end collisions. There's also increases in time spent not looking on the road, swerving within a lane and not paying attention when stop lights turn green. Who hasn't seen that?

Does that call need to be made or answered? Studies also show statistically there is no difference in productivity of those that use phones when driving and those that do not.

Driving to and from school while using a cell phone is statistically one of the most risky daily activities performed by school personnel. Limit this risk by shortening phone calls, placing the call once you've reached your destination and most of all asking yourself, "Do I need to make this phone call now?" Don't become a one of the 3,331.



“I went to the bookstore and asked the salesperson, ‘Where’s the self-help section?’ She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.”

George Carlin