

*#400,000 #Over3,000 #1.6Million #1outof4*

Causing nearly 400,000 injuries and over 3,000 deaths annually, distracted driving is one of the most hazardous situations a motorist can experience. This was a fact reinforced throughout driver's education class. The National Safety Council reports that there are 1.6 million cell phone related crashes annually which means that about 1 out of 4 crashes in the US deals with cell phones in some manner. But cell phones aren't the only problem. Any activity, including texting, eating and drinking, talking on the phone, fiddling with the radio, using navigation devices, playing loud music, putting on make-up, singing, and driving emotionally, that diverts attention from fully focusing on driving is considered distracted driving. However, with the popularity of smartphones, texting and viewing social media images are the most alarming of these distractions, especially with teens and new drivers, keeping them from the primary task of safe driving.

Teens may believe that they text quickly or have great reaction time because they are younger but the reality is that it is not fast enough. Reading or sending a text takes your eyes off the road for about five seconds. Five seconds may not seem like a long time but that equates to driving the length of a football field (100 yards) with your eyes closed at 55 miles per hour according to TeenSafe.com. All of these distractions and more increases your risk of crashing, possibly ruining your life and that of the ones you love. No message, no snap, no tweet, no post is that important and worth injuring others or yourself.

*#DontTxtUrLifeGDBY #OneTxtOrCallCouldWreckItAll #ChooseUrselfOverUrSelfie*

There is a plethora of other dangers a focused driver needs to be mindful of such as weather, construction, and road conditions. Driving may be fun and liberating, especially to new drivers, but it is serious business and deserves a lot of commitment. Concentrating on the road and not letting visual, manual, and cognitive distractions steer you into danger is vital. Yet accidents happen. We cannot control what other drivers are doing on the road but at least we can control our actions and mindfulness behind the wheel. If we take the time to educate ourselves and practice self-discipline, we can make the roadways safer for everyone.

There are several strategies teens and adults can put into action to help curtail the urge to drive distractedly. Both teens and adults can model proper driving methods. If your friend sees you putting the phone away before you get behind the wheel, they may think twice about it next time they do too. Discuss the law with the drivers in your house. Knowing the legalities, penalties, and consequences can be a powerful deterrent. If parents are still concerned about their teen driver, they may choose to resort to blocking apps. All of us can elect to advocate our local government and law enforcement agencies to educate the public more and produce safe driving benefits. To keep temptation abated, designate a passenger to navigate or control the GPS system or give them the job of handling the music or checking your messages for you. Parents can empower their teen passengers by reemphasizing not to get into a car not only if the driver

has been drinking but also if they are distracted drivers. Remind them that it is okay to call you for a ride no matter what the circumstances if they do not feel safe.

As with any new advancement in technology, there are both negative and positive aspects. It is how we handle the bad, how we react to the problems, how we choose to solve the situation and protect ourselves and others that matters. We need to be cognizant of the distractions and learn to adapt to them. Drivers need to accept that cell phones will be around for quite some time and that it is better to live with them responsibly than to die because of them.

*#ItCanWait #PutItDown #NotWorthIt #BetterLeftUnreadThanDead #endDD*