

ARTICLES ON TEXTING AND DRIVING

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TEXTING WHILE DRIVING: MEDICAL GROUPS SPEAK OUT By: Johnathan Welsh

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the Orthopaedic Trauma Association are the latest groups to weigh in on just how bad the epidemic is. They should know, as they treat a lot of people injured in car crashes.

"To say this habit can be deadly is the truth. It is an outcome we unfortunately see every day," said AAOS president John J. Callaghan. "The problem with the use of 24/7 communications devices is that every driver believes he or she is immune to slip ups, but isn't."

The groups are sponsoring a national print and billboard ad campaign urging people to give up the often-deadly habit. The ads read, "OMG. Get the Message: Texting While Driving is a Deadly Distraction." The words appear over a broken, bloody windshield. Distribution of the print ads starts Monday. Billboards have been sent out and should appear shortly.

Of course many people are so immersed in typing or reading their handheld screens that they might miss the billboards as they drive past. We have all seen — or even performed — outrageous driving maneuvers after distractions caused us to stray from our lane, miss an exit or nearly run a red light. I find that once I get over the initial anger I always feel at least a touch of empathy.

The orthopaedic groups say 520,000 people were injured in texting-related car crashes in 2008. The National Safety Council, another group that gathers automotive safety statistics, estimates about 28 percent of crashes, or 1.6 million a year, result at least in part from drivers talking or texting on cell phones.

Governor Signs Texting While Driving Ban *Apr 30, 2010 11:56 AM EDT*

Governor Granholm signs legislation in the national spotlight. She signed a ban on texting while driving during a broadcast of the Oprah Winfrey Show that makes Michigan the 24th state with laws against texting behind the wheel. The governor appeared on the Oprah show via satellite from Detroit's Renaissance Center. It was one of many no phone zone rallies taking place across the country, all prompted by the Oprah broadcast.

Governor Jennifer Granholm: "Even things that have absolute common sense sometimes require a little boost and that means putting it into law. It should be a no brainer, but we often know that with teenagers, you need that little extra push to make sure they understand that it comes out of their pocket if they get pulled over."

The bill signing is a victory for many across the state, including those who've been accidents because of other people texting. One woman almost lost her life due to texting behind the wheel. Loretta Strong has been in a wheelchair ever since the summer of '08. That's when a 19-year-old-girl ran her off the road. Loretta Strong: "We rolled 6 times and hit a tree."

The cause of the accident- texting while driving. It's a distraction that killed nearly 6,000 people in 2008. That's why Strong says she's lucky to still have her life. Loretta Strong: "I'm 66 years old and I'm not ready to give up."

And she didn't give up fighting for the legislation, so as the governor signed it into law, she celebrated along with thousands of others, including many who pledged to never drive when they're distracted. People are convinced, but others might need some help.

Suzy Carter, Lansing Area Safety Council: "Everybody is going to need each other's help with this because that's what it is, it's an addiction. It will take time, but I think it will help."

So no matter how important your text may be and if it doesn't wait, you'll be breaking the law. The law goes into effect on July 1st. First-time offenders will have to pay a 100-dollar fine.

Massachusetts should ban all cellphone use while driving

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WHILE CELLULAR phones have emerged as one of the great conveniences in life, everyone should stop pretending that it's safe to use them behind the wheel. Massachusetts, certainly, has been slow to deal with the problem. While negotiators for the state House and Senate are working out details of a bill that would ban drivers under 18 from talking on cellphones and sending text messages, it remains unclear whether lawmakers are willing to apply the same restrictions to adults. In fact, a categorical ban on all types of cellphone use by all drivers is in order.

Since almost every adult with a cellphone and a car has been guilty of using both at the same time, lawmakers' hesitation is understandable. There is great convenience in talking on the phone while driving, and it can increase the productivity of executives who can participate in conference calls while on the road.

Unfortunately, the evidence is clear: distracted driving is a lethal problem. The National Safety Council estimates that a quarter of all crashes in the United States — 1.4 million crashes, with 645,000 injuries — involve cellphones. Distracted driving kills 6,000 people a year nationwide, with cellphones being the likely culprit in more than 40 percent of fatalities.

In a visit to MIT last week, US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood spoke of a "deadly epidemic." If any other activity caused the deaths of 6,000 people it would be banned overnight. Laws aimed at restricting cellphone usage in cars are inching their way across America, state by state.

So far, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 25 states ban texting while driving. Seven states and the District of Columbia ban drivers from talking on handheld devices. But while so-called hands-free phones prevent accidents related to fumbling with handhelds, they do not solve the fundamental problem: Drivers who are distracted by conversations with people who aren't in the vehicle. Yes, the same kind of distractions can come from screaming toddlers or quarreling spouses inside the car, but that's no argument for using technology to allow similar distractions from outside the car.

Massachusetts has been notably laggard in dealing with this problem. And passing legislation that only affects teen drivers would be a serious cop-out. Police statewide should be given primary enforcement to stop motorists and ticket them solely for talking or texting on a cellphone. The fine should equal that of a speeding violation, with penalty points put on driving records.

The fact that so many drivers talk on phones while driving isn't an argument for tolerating it. Rather, the ubiquity of the problem attests to the need for tough legislation. Without strong action, this fatal epidemic will only get worse. ■

Texting While Driving is Just as Bad as Drunk Driving

Written by WGNO New Orleans, LA ABC26 News | Monday, 26 April 2010 14:30

It's illegal, but many people still do it. Now, some say it's as dangerous as drunk driving texting behind the wheel.

How many times have you texted while driving? Did you know that you're 24 times more likely to get into an accident while texting? Motorist William Collins says, "On my way home from work one day, driving and texting almost ran into the back of another car, bad idea, don't do it."

So why is it so hard to quit texting? Could it be addictive? One expert says it just may be. Beth Inbau, president of the National Safety Council explains, "Initially when a teenager for example does a lot of text messaging, when they first pick up that cell phone, and receive a message or send a message, there's a little shot of dopamine that goes off in the brain which is kind of the precursor of an addiction."

But it's still not an excuse, as mom Shirley Lucurto knows full well. "I have a 20 year old and an 18 year old who like to text and I always fuss at them not to do that especially when nobody else is paying attention on the road" Lucurto says.

So education is key....kids need to know that texting while driving is illegal in Louisiana, and now lawmakers are trying to pass federal legislation making it illegal in every other state as well. Perhaps the message will save a life, or prevent another from going to jail. Teen driver Alex Martin admits, "I think I'm pretty much gonna stop because now you know and studies show you that it's the worse thing to do probably while driving."

Still no ban on texting & driving in Florida

WPTV.com WEST PALM BEACH, FL – 4/30/10

30 states ban texting while driving, but not Florida. That proposal died in the State House of Representatives earlier this week. "A lot of people are totally irresponsible behind the wheel, by assuming that the road is clear," said Mike Ostrovsky. He believes it's that irresponsible attitude that cost him a car, and very nearly a daughter.

"Another neighbor coming out of the 90 degree curve, was not looking on the road, driving 300 yards after the curve, and going completely into my daughter's lane," said Ostrovsky. Seven months have passed since the accident, and Mike's daughter is recovering, but the news that the texting while driving ban won't be passed in Florida leaves him feeling, "Powerless I guess, hopeless. Completely frustrated," said Ostrovsky.

He is not the only one, Marianne Crawley does not pay for a texting plan, and says that texting while driving has an even steeper price, "People are going to die, we've seen it happen already. For whatever reason they did it, they just don't care about human lives," said Crawley.

The National Safety Council has attributed 6,000 deaths and half a million injuries to cell-phone usage while driving. "Your vehicle needs your undivided attention. You've got to be mindful of everything around you. I don't think you can be texting and be driving at the same time," said Lee Smith, while filling his tank, Friday. In other words, if you are not going to keep both hands on the wheel, at least keep them off your cell phone.

Controversial Texting While Driving PSA Set To Be Released Monday

By [ROB LANDRETH](#) Published: May 09, 2010 **News Channel 7 SPARTANBURG, SC --**

A controversial Public Service Announcement about the dangers of texting while driving is scheduled to be released Monday throughout the upstate of South Carolina and in Columbia.

Beginning Monday, the AAA Carolinas Foundation for Traffic Safety will broadcast a graphic 30 second traffic safety video designed to educate drivers, especially teenagers and young adults, about the dangers of texting while driving. The 30 second Public Service Announcement will air only during the evening hours on seven Charter stations in Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson and Clemson and 13 Time Warner stations in Columbia, the organization said in a prepared release.

"This video may shock some viewers and that is the intent: to create a lasting impression that texting while driving is deadly," said Thomas Crosby, President of AAA Carolinas Foundation for Traffic Safety. The PSA begins with three teenage girls driving down the road and the driver trying to send a text message. It jumps forward to a head-on crash that partially ejects one girl from the vehicle and then a second collision, where a car strikes the teenagers in the side of their vehicle. The commercial displays graphic depicted injury scenes from the sight of the accident, where two girls perish and shows injured people involved. It ends with the statement, "You Drive, You Text, You Die."

In the prepared statement released late Saturday night, AAA Carolinas President and CEO, Dave Parsons, said that the goal of the commercial is to elicit an emotional response to residents in South Carolina, which was rated the worst state in the nation for texting while driving, according to a 2008 online survey.

"Its one thing to tell people not to text and drive," said Parsons. "By eliciting an emotional response, we hope this video will change deadly distracted driving behavior." The Foundation says that the commercial is part of a continuing effort to educate motorists on the dangers of distracted driving. "Using a cell phone (talking hands-free or hand-held) while driving is very dangerous, as many motorists know from personal experience or from watching drivers using cell phones in nearby cars," Parsons said.

The organization says that they will disseminate the 30 second video to any community organization, high school or non-profit group that wishes to use it to promote traffic safety. Earlier this year, Clemson City Council passed a no-texting-while-driving ordinance, which will go into effect June 1, making the town the first and only in South Carolina to make it illegal to text while driving. Other similar legislation has been introduced in the South Carolina House of representative, but it has yet to be passed.

Be advised, the PSA contain extremely graphic material that some people may not find suitable, especially for young children, but you can view the controversial PSA on the organization's website at http://lamanagementco.com/wp-content/uploads/AAA_30sec_PSA.zip A full 4 minute unedited video depicting the entire accident scene can also be viewed at the groups website at the following link: http://www.aaacarolinas.com/Automotive/Safety/distracted_driving.htm.

Truckinginfo.com 5/17/2010

NTSB Investigation of Deadly Crash Confirms Cell Phone Use

The National Transportation Safety Board issued an update regarding its investigation of the March highway accident that killed 11 people in Kentucky. The investigation found that the truck driver was using a cell phone at some point leading up to the accident, but it's unknown whether or not he was using it when the truck departed the roadway. The NTSB would not make a determination about whether the cell phone use was a factor in the accident.

The NTSB said Kenneth Laymon, 45, had been driving a 1999 Freightliner truck with a 53-foot semitrailer southbound on I-65 near Munfordville, when he departed the left travel lane at about a five-degree angle, crossed a 60-foot wide grass median, overrode a four-cable guardrail barrier and struck a 15-passenger van that was traveling in the left northbound lane. The truck continued across the northbound travel lanes, overturning, struck a stone wall, and was engulfed in a post-crash fire.

The van was not involved in any post-crash fire. The 2000 Dodge van was carrying nine adults, two children and an infant. The two children were the only survivors. Eight of the nine adults were not wearing seat belts, NTSB said.

The truck was on a 690-mile trip from Lansing, Mich. To Cullman, Ala. The driver set out from Lansing at about 4 p.m. the previous day. The accident occurred about 13 hours later with about 243 miles remaining in the trip. Investigators are trying to determine how many hours the truck driver was operating the vehicle and if he took any rest periods between his departure from Lansing and the point at which the accident occurred, NTSB said. The truck was not equipped with an electronic onboard recorder, and the driver's logbook was destroyed in the fire.

A toxicology test on the truck driver was negative for alcohol and nine legal and illegal drugs. At this point in the investigation, no medical issues have been found that might have led to a sudden incapacitation of the truck driver. The NTSB expects to finish the investigation in 12 to 18 months.

Belpre's anti-texting ordinance passes second reading

Jolene Craig POSTED: May 11, 2010

BELPRE - City council Monday passed the second of three readings of an ordinance to prohibit text messaging while driving. "Whether the ordinance will truly be effective is unknown at this point but I am willing to support any tool that will give the department the ability to make the city safer," said police Chief E.D. Clevenger. "The department will do what we can."

The legislation gives the city's police officers the right to stop people who are text messaging while driving and not paying attention to the job at hand, said Councilman John Baker, who is also the chairman of council's Police and Fire Committee and brought the issue to the city's attention.

Text messaging while driving has become a national issue with many municipalities and states discussing and enacting legislation making it illegal. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, at least 6,000 people were killed by distracted drivers in 2008; many of those drivers were sending and reading text messages.

The ordinance will not prohibit the use of cell phones while driving, only the texting function of the devices, said associate law director Jim McCauley. The ordinance reads that the first offense is a minor misdemeanor and the driver will be fined \$150 and court costs. The second offense in one year or the first offense with an accident causing injury will be a third-degree misdemeanor with a fine of up to \$500 and up to 60 days in jail.

If passed, Belpre will become the fourth city in Ohio to enact anti-texting while driving legislation along with Columbus, Toledo and Zanesville, Baker said. McCauley said that having looked at a copy of Toledo's legislation Belpre's penalty is light. "Our council had a discussion that they thought our penalty was too severe, but Toledo's is more severe than ours," McCauley said.