



## TEXTING AND DRIVING

**Though we all know the dangers of taking our eyes off the road, most of us mistakenly think we can juggle those big hunks of steel we drive every day with devices like cell phones without paying the price. New research has revealed the most dangerous driver distraction of all is texting.**

According to Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, texting while driving increases the risk of accident 23.2 times over unimpaired driving. An accident can happen in two to three seconds while texting.

Texting while driving results in longer response times than even drunken driving. While an unimpaired driver can respond quickly to changes in traffic and begin braking within half a second, a legally drunk driver needs four additional feet to begin braking—and a driver who's texting needs 70.

In the moments before a crash or near crash, drivers typically spend nearly five seconds looking at their mobile devices—enough time at typical highway speeds to cover more area than the length of a football field.

Though 95 percent of drivers surveyed said texting behind the wheel was unacceptable and unsafe, at least 21 percent admit to doing it anyway.

Especially amongst teens, texting results in erratic driving behavior, like lane weaving and speeding up and down, increasing the likelihood of hurting pedestrians and running into other vehicles.



With dangers like these in mind, what can drivers constantly bombarded by incoming text messages and phone calls do to stay safe while driving? It's as simple as either muting the sound or turning the phone off every time we climb in our cars. According to the American Automobile Association, doing so can actually decrease the risk of accident due to texting by 50 percent.

Thirty-four states plus the District of Columbia have text-messaging bans. In 31 states (including New York, New Jersey, California and Connecticut) and D.C. it is a primary offense, meaning drivers can be pulled over specifically for texting.

Regardless of your state's stance on the issue, texting while driving just isn't safe. So take these facts to heart, turn down the volume on your cell phone when you hit the road, and resist the urge to text while driving. It might just save your life and others.

### **NYC vs. irresponsible drivers**

There was an average of 540 car accidents each day in August in New York City. The leading cause was drivers yapping on their phones, texting or posting a status update, new police data shows.

"Without a doubt the new technology that we have has created a lot more opportunity for distraction," AAA New York spokesman Robert Sinclair Jr. said.

"New Yorkers don't want to waste a second," said Councilwoman Jessica Lappin (D-Manhattan), who sponsored the bill requiring the crash data to be made public. "I still see people still talking on their phone and texting while driving when they are stopped at a red light."



A recent federal study found that distracted drivers caused up to 25% of all crashes nationally. Those distractions also include fiddling with a GPS device and changing radio stations. A few months ago, Gov. Cuomo signed into law a bill toughening penalties for drivers caught texting on the road.

The law, which took effect immediately, allows police to pull a driver over just for texting or using a hand-held electronic device. It also increases the penalty for offenders from two to three points on their license, and even includes a fine of up to \$150.

*As we learned on December 14, 2011, states should ban all drivers use of cell phones and other portable electronic devices, except in emergencies, the National Transportation Safety Board said. The recommendation, unanimously agreed to by the five-member board, applies to both hands-free and hand-held phones and significantly exceeds any existing state laws restricting texting and cell phone use behind the wheel. The board is expected to recommend new restrictions on driver use of electronic devices behind the wheel. While the NTSB doesn't have the power to impose restrictions, it's recommendations carry significant weight with federal regulators and congressional and state lawmakers.*

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