

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Heads Up Driving Week – September 26-October 2, 2010 Fact Sheet

Safety – Fatalities, Threats and Perceptions

- More than one million people have died in motor vehicle crashes over the past 25 years in the United States, including 33,963 in 2009.
 - Despite the 8.9% decline in fatalities from 2008 to 2009, these fatalities represent 93 deaths per day.
 - Estimates of the number of crashes, injuries and deaths caused by distracted driving vary widely due to limitations of existing motor vehicle crash data. NHTSA estimates that 16% of fatal crashes and fatalities involved distracted driving.
- Studies using driving simulators have found that using a cell phone while driving significantly impairs a driver's reaction time and increases crash risk.
- Studies of the cell phone records of crash-involved drivers suggest that using a cell phone while driving is associated with roughly a quadrupling of crash risk.
- In a recent nationally representative survey, 52% of drivers report that driving feels less safe than it did five years ago— 17 percentage point increase since the same time last year.
 - Of these respondents, 40% cited cell phones/texting/distracted drivers as the biggest reason they feel less safe.
 - The second most cited reason was speeding/aggressive driving (23%).
- Experts estimate that drivers are doing something potentially distracting (mentally, physically or both) more than 15 percent of the time their vehicles are in motion. However, when a driver's eyes are off the road for more than two seconds, for any reason, the odds of a crash occurring are nearly double those of a driver paying attention to the road.
- 88% of drivers reported that they consider other drivers text messaging and emailing a very serious threat to their personal safety—almost identical to the percent that rated people driving after drinking alcohol as a very serious threat (87%).

Distracted Driving – Technology

- Despite considering a behavior unacceptable for a driver to engage in while driving, many surveyed admitted to engaging in the behaviors themselves.

Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.



- 92% of drivers said that text messaging while driving was unacceptable, and 80% support laws against reading, typing or sending text messages or emails while driving.
 - However, 24% of all those surveyed admitted to having read or sent a text message or email while driving in the last month.
- A significant number of motorists surveyed rated talking on a cell phone while driving as unacceptable (64% hand-held, 42% hands-free).
 - Yet, in the last month 69% of all those surveyed admitted to using a cell phone while driving; 34% reported doing this fairly often or regularly.
- Cell phone use is problem among all ages;
 - 82% of drivers age 16-24 admitted to talking on the phone while driving with 40% saying they did so fairly often or regularly, and 84% of drivers age 25-34 with 50% acknowledging they did so fairly often or regularly. However, the problem extends to drivers age 45-54 as nearly 70% admit to talking on the phone while driving with 34% admitting to doing it fairly often or regularly.
 - Texting or emailing while driving is most prevalent among young drivers, including 55% of those aged 16-24 admitting doing it with 17% saying they do it fairly often or regularly, and 41% of drivers age 25-34 admitted to it as well with 14% saying they did so fairly often or regularly. For drivers age 45-54, these numbers fall to 19% and 4% respectively.
- In a survey of drivers ages 17-26 who own a cell phone and drive at least twice a week, respondents acknowledged they are attached to their phones. If they did not have their cell phones, 62% said they would be uncomfortable, 58% stated they would be lost, and 56% admitted would feel detached from friends. This survey also found that although 72% believed texting would affect a drivers ability to control a vehicle (in general), 33% still felt that they personally were completely in control of their car even when texting.

Distracted Driving – Not Limited to High-Tech Gadgets

- Drivers today are getting distracted by many of the same things that distracted drivers 100 years ago -- passengers, things outside the vehicle, and objects in the vehicle that move or fall over. Activities like eating, smoking, and reading are distractions just like high-tech ones, such as text messaging, emailing, or using a cell phone.
- Dealing with passengers is one of the most frequently reported causes of distraction.
 - Energetic teen passengers can be particularly distracting, especially to inexperienced, young drivers. And, kids can be four times more distracting than adults as passengers, and infants eight times more distracting.

For more information about Heads Up Driving Week, visit www.aaafoundation.org/headsup.