Survive the Drive

Do you know the dangers of distraction?

Survey: The Distractions That Cause Crashes

Tips on surviving the road and stopping bad habits

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Photo by Vanessa Freeman
Distracted Driving: An Introduction

The definition of distracted driving is when a driver engages in any activity that detracts their attention from the road. Common examples are the use of cell phones, talking to other passengers, eating or drinking, reaching for an item, or even reading. This irresponsible act of distracted driving occurs so frequently that the resulting consequences are being taken for granted. In the blink of an eye, simple tasks such as sending a text can turn devastating and deadly. Tens of thousands of people have been injured while engaging in distracted driving, and these numbers will continue to rise if not brought into proper awareness.

This is the very reason why our group has teamed up to create a magazine that could inspire people to drive safe and avoid the dangers of distracted driving. We hope to help people understand the dreadful consequences of distracted driving and how easily avoidable they are. A recent survey from NTSHA shows that about 80% of car accidents are a result of distracted driving, and with car accidents as one of the top causes of death in America, a change needs to occur. It doesn’t matter if the occupant in a car is an experienced driver, a new driver or even a passenger, everybody has a choice in preventing the worse. Distracted driving has a simple solution, and it is all about making the right decisions.

A survey was conducted to show what the largest causes of distraction are, and the frequency of each trait. This information is used to show what causes distraction, and what could potentially result in devastation. Over sixty students observed cars to see how many of our peers and community members were subjects of distracted driving. The data was gathered from the streets near our high school, and we were surprised with our findings.

On the back cover, there are also some tips that recommend ways to be the change and stop unnecessary death.

This magazine’s purpose is to help push the change that is desperately needed on our roads. We hope to illustrate to everybody that in just three seconds any life can be changed forever: it only takes three seconds. Distracted driving is a deadly habit to develop and to use while driving. We hope to greatly influence people to not engage in distracted driving so that the road can be a safer place for all to survive the drive.

The Dangers of Distracted Driving

According to NOPUS (National Occupant Protection Use Survey), an astonishing 421,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver in the year 2012. That’s 421,000 people we see everyday; great grandmothers on their way to church, sons driving home from their first date, and parents dropping their kids off at school. So many lives are being altered by small acts committed by drivers raised in a world so accustomed to rapid living that they don’t see the danger in what they’re doing. From the driver, to the victims, to the friends, family, and community members; there is no way around the aftermath of distracted driving.

In a survey conducted by the NHTSA, 1 in 5 drivers of all ages confess to driving distracted in the past year. An alarming 48% of young drivers have seen their parents drive while talking on a cell phone and 32% confess to doing so themselves. A shocking 77% of U.S. citizens claim that it’s easy to use a cell phone and drive at the same time. Other varieties of distracted driving range from caring for other passengers to eating and drinking. Some drivers do not realize the dangers of their actions, while others ignore these serious threats; threats that put the entire driving community in danger. The statistics speak for themselves and the dangers of distracted driving are everywhere.

Distracted driving affects everybody. Alex Brown, 17, was killed in 2009 on her way to school. She was texting, and lost control of her car. Her family and friends were devastated. Not only are drivers in danger, but so are innocent people outside the car. Calli Ann Murray was a couple of days away from her third birthday when she was instantly killed by a distracted driver. Calli and her mother were walking home from the park, and when they crossed the street they were both hit by a young driver on their phone. Calli’s mom was critically injured as well. Both of these deaths could have been easily avoided.

Everybody is at risk because of distracted driving. It takes only three seconds of distraction for a fatal accident occur. Is it worth it? The families and friends of countless victims would answer no.

The roads should and can be a safe environment instead of the nightmare they are today. Change begins with you. This means no more texting, eating, or applying makeup, and committing to saving thousands of lives, including your own. Operating a motor vehicle is a huge responsibility and should be viewed as such. With the help of your commitment, we can make distracted driving a concern of the past.
The source of the data collected came from over 60 students. Each group of three were appointed a time to observe ten mobile cars on a nearby street. They looked for these specific traits in each driver: drivers with a mobile device to their ear, drivers speaking into a visible headset, drivers adjusting the radio, drivers distracted by other passengers, drivers drinking and/or eating, and drivers manipulating hand-held devices. For the purpose of having accurate comparisons to national statistics, the traits of having a phone to the driver’s ear and speaking into a visible headset were combined. Over 600 cars were observed, but only half of those cars contained cases of distraction.

The combined data came to show that about 308 cars had a distracted driver behind the wheel out of the 600 total cars that were observed. That data was then broken down into subcategories of the different distractions. In the student survey, the top cause of distraction came from other passengers in the same car. 26% of distracted cars were reported to have a driver’s attention focused on another passenger. The second most common distraction was at 25% when drivers were talking or listening to a phone. The lowest cause of distraction came from drivers manipulating hand-held devices (See Graph 1).

The national statistics came from two NTSHA systems: GES and FARS. The data that was used as a comparison reflected the variables attributed to crashes that were recorded throughout all 50 states in 2011. It is noted that only a select few of the many causes of distraction from the NTSHA survey were used to compare with the student results. These numbers do not represent the entire survey, check NTSHA.gov for the complete results.

In the national survey, the largest cause of distraction out of the observed characteristics was from other passengers. The second most common distraction was talking and listening to a cellular phone. The national survey also shows that drivers manipulating a hand-held device was the least common distraction.

The student and national results had similar findings. The most distraction came from other car occupants. Conversations between driver and passenger were recorded if the driver’s eyes were focused on the person. This simple act is something that drivers need to be aware of.
Tips to Survive the Drive:

Distracted Driving is a serious issue that affects thousands of people every year. The way to stop these incidents and create a safer driving community is simple. It is up to you to take action, practice safe driving and encourage it among others. Here are some do’s and don’ts to help you out.

✅ As a passenger in a vehicle, make sure the driver is practicing safe habits. If not SPEAK UP!

✅ Remember that any sort of distraction can be lethal. Save the distraction for when you are off the road.

✅ As a passenger, offer to help the driver if they want to multitask. “Here, let me send that text for you.”

❌ As a passenger in a car, the worst thing to do is ignore a distracted driver. Do not stay silent!

❌ As a driver do not engage in any activity that takes your eyes and attention off the road.

❌ According to our survey, other passengers are a major cause of distraction. Don’t be the cause.