

# LIFE IS A HIGHWAY

Do you wanna ride it all night long?

It's Not  
Just  
Texting

What is  
Distracted  
Driving?

WHAT CAN  
YOU DO?

Undivided  
Attention Could  
Save a Life

By Michael Rowlett

Data For  
Distracted Driving  
in Northeast Indiana



Life Is A Highway

# What Can YOU Do?

- Tell your friends and family the dangers of distracted driving.
- Write letters to State Representatives about getting distracted driving education in your high school curriculum.
- Volunteer at organizations that deal with distracted driving.
  - Use social media to fight against distracted driving.
  - Be a good example, and refrain from distracted driving.
    - Stand up, and let your voice be heard.



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# Undivided Focus Could

## Save a Life

By Michael Rowlett

Rodney O. Thompson was just a normal senior at Homestead High School in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He played and loved the game of basketball, he hung out with his friends, and all the girls liked him. His dream was to start a law firm after he got out of college. However, he had no idea of the harrowing fate that awaited him. It was a perfect autumn day in October. The leaves were bright with fall colors, the air was brisk, and the children were outside playing in the leaves. This "perfect October day" was also a day of devastating tragedy. Rodney was driving much too fast, and in a single heartbeat, his life, dreams, and everything going for him were crushed. His Mercury encircled a utility pole, and he died instantly on impact. He was texting and driving the moment he skidded into the pole. Distracted driving consumed another innocent victim that day. It needs to be America's greatest priority to correct its ignorance as to why it is important to refrain from distracted driving when citizen's are putting dozens of lives at stake.

Distracted driving puts many people's lives in severe danger each day, which is exactly why Americans need to be educated on it. When someone is distracted while they are driving, they are not focused on the task at hand: arriving at their destination in one piece. Not only do they put their lives in danger, but they also put everyone around them in danger. "You have no control over other drivers," stated Sgt. Ron Galaviz, who is a proud member of the Indiana State Police Dept. He explained that when people drive distractedly, they can injure people surrounding them. They are not focused on the road, and in many cases, swerve in the middle of the road, or even off of it. Though the thought is quite terrifying, people need to ask themselves, "What if I were to get hit by a distracted driver?" Chris Schuemann, who is an expert from the Parkview Trauma Center, explained that "about 95% of people in car crashes survive, but that's just because we have good people." He was referring to the doctors who tend the people's injuries from the tragic occurrences. "It's terribly gruesome," he went on, "Bodies are in shapes that you wouldn't believe. They hardly look human." Careless people who allow themselves to be distracted drivers are the causes to these horrifying mutations.

Algebra 2 students at New Tech Academy in Fort Wayne, Indiana have recently completed a study on the amount of distracted drivers at various sites in

the city. They discovered that about 63% of the population are distracted drivers. This is a humongous risk to the safety of Fort Wayne, as a whole. If people were to step up and tell of the dangers and the devastations that can come from distracted driving, then drivers might finally realize that they need to stray away from distractions.

Along with putting people's lives in danger, distracted driving also increases the chance of car crashes. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, "Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded." There could be a lot of different things within that distance. There could be stop signs, stoplights, a curve in the road, a child playing in the street, etc. One may ponder, "How does this increase the risk of a crash?"



The FCC states that, "The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times worse than driving while not distracted." They will more than likely run into something. Sgt. Ron Galaviz defines a crash as, "a collision with cars that people can prevent. Accidents are crashes that people do not have the power to prevent. For example, when people get into crashes due to the weather, that is truly an accident." Crashes from distracted driving would not be considered accidents, because people can prevent crashes by refraining from distractions.

America desperately needs to be taught the importance of refraining from distracted driving, because it puts people's lives in danger, increases the number of crashes, and is illegal in some aspects. People die each and every day from distracted driving. There is a way to prevent these sorrowful deaths, however. People need to spread the word to the other people they know. Although, teenagers are not the only people who need to be educated. Despite many peoples' stereotypes, Chris Schuemann stated, "I see more adults get into crashes due to distracted driving than teens. They're not people fresh out of school, and the parents aren't setting good examples." One example of a parent trying to correct this is Rodney Thompson's mother, Diveeta Thompson. She was the reason the laws about texting and driving in Indiana were passed. She was determined to make a difference, and to help her community so that other parents would not have to go through her same hardships. If more people were like her, and wanted to help educate the public on distracted driving, then there would be minimal crashes due to the infamous distracted driving.

# What Is Distracted Driving?

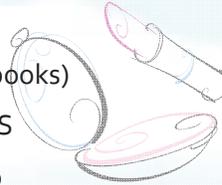
By Rachel Shie



Distracted driving is defined as driving a vehicle while engaging in an activity that has the potential to distract the driver from the task of driving (Dictionary.) This covers an entire array of actions the everyday driver may partake in. Legislation covering what is and isn't lawful when driving is in dispute; state laws vary widely, as do the national laws. Who comes to mind when one thinks of a distracted driver? The teen population; even though it is sure that they aren't the only one's texting and driving. Distracted driving is becoming a widespread epidemic in the United States when society is out of focus and don't take driving as seriously as they should.

(distracts the sight), and manual (distracts the body) (U.S.) Engaging in technology, eating food, talking to passengers in the car, all contribute to driver inattention. Common activities not previously mentioned include:

- Grooming
- Reading (maps /books)
- Using PDA or GPS
- Watching a video
- Radio/mp3/CD player operatio



Texting is described as being the most dangerous of all distractions for it distracts the mind, the body, and the sight.

If one's undivided attention is not on the task at hand of operating a vehicle, the operator is not only putting their own life at risk, but also all life surrounding them: pedestrians, other cars, as well as the environment (both natural and man-made). The leading cause of death for teens in America is traffic crash-

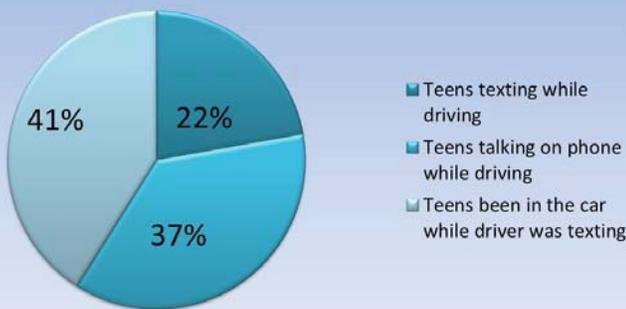
es. (Indiana.) Statistics show that in 2009, more than 5,400 people at the hands of distracted drivers (Indiana.) and the numbers are only increasing. Just this year fatality tolls are expected to rise to six hundred and fifty.

National Law pertaining to distracted driving states, "Texting and cell phone use is banned for commercial drivers."(NCSL.) State laws range from prohibition of simply texting to use of cellular devices altogether. Indiana, in particular, dismisses texting for driver's over the age of eighteen (eighteen and under are forbidden from total cell phone use.) Though, it is known that everyday these laws are defied by the flighty teen and the so-called "experienced" or "seasoned" driver. Laws are not strict enough or abided by enough by citizens for it to save the lives of those who have already been lost, and those that will be lost.

The society of the United States is out of focus, causing the death of thousands on interstates across the country. America needs to wake up and realize driving isn't a game; it's dangerous and requires focus and attention. Else the driving age will be risen, and many more will be killed. Legislation is too lenient, and citizens are too caught up in their newest devices to care about their own lives. Distracted Driving is becoming a serial killer of the roads.

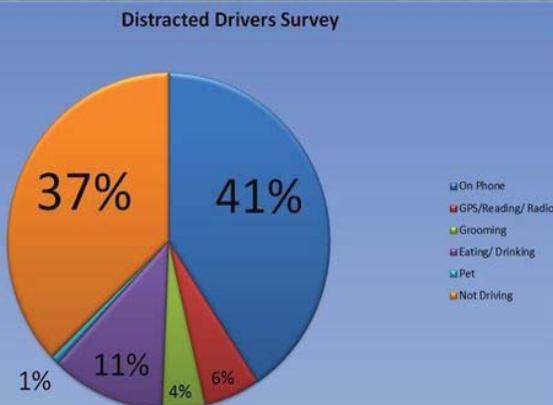
There are several different ways to categorize all the activities that constitute distracted driving: cognitive (distracts the mind), visual

## Teens Who Drive Distracted



## Data For Distracted Driving in Northeast Indiana

By Cody Meyer



Students at New Tech determined the drivers of Fort Wayne are very distracted; the total number of drivers surveyed was 5616. The category with the least number of distracted drivers was pets with one person. The percentage of drivers observed using undivided attention when operating the phone, GPS/Reading/ Radio, was thirty seven percent, which is adequate; however the number needs to grow.