Decide to Drive
"It Can Wait"
Say NO to DD

What is distracted driving?
A look at distracted driving in America and Hawaii

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In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in auto crashes caused by distracted driving, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration’s Summary of Statistical Findings from their National Occupant Protection Use Survey.

The Hawai'i State Department of Health said that almost 10% of Hawai'i auto fatalities were caused by distracted drivers from 2007-2010.

Distracted driving is a threat to drivers and pedestrians across America, but Hawai'i recently became the 40th state to enact a distracted driving law.

Hawai'i driving laws
Governor Neil Abercrombie banned texting while driving when he signed Bill HB980 HD2 SD2 into law on May 20. It went into effect on July 1, 2013. The law also prohibits the use of other handheld devices for all drivers, but hands-free devices are okay for drivers over 21.

“The use of cellular phones or other mobile electronic devices during the task of driving constitutes a distraction and poses a risk of harm to the driver and others in the vehicle or on the road,” said Highway Safety: Use of Mobile Electronic Devices, the report that accompanies the bill.

Consequences
One of the consequences of distracted driving is injury.
Nalani Wickes, a nurse for Hawai'i Life Flight air ambulance, said the injuries she has seen as a result of distracted driving are “head injuries and broken ribs.” She said that in her experience, “The age range of people who get injured [from distracted driving] is 18-30 years old”.

Another consequence for driving while distracted is a fine. The police departments in Hawai'i issued 20,905 distracted driving citations statewide in 2012, according to the Hawai'i Department of Transportation. Penalties for distracted driving increase with the number of occurrences.
For the first offense, a driver is fined $100-200. On the second offense, the fine is $200-300, and the third offense will cost $300-500. The fine is doubled in a school or construction zone.

Forms of distracted driving
Distracted driving includes texting, using a cellphone, eating and drinking, talking to passengers, grooming, reading, using a navigation system, watching a video, and adjusting the radio or CD player.

Texting while driving is a distraction because it requires the driver’s visual, manual, and cognitive attention. It is the most common distraction.

What to do
There are many ways to avoid distracted driving. Because talking on a cellphone also requires the driver’s cognitive attention, drivers should make phone calls before or after driving. If the phone rings while the car is in motion, let it go to voicemail.

Better yet, use the AT&T DriveMode app. When the app is enabled, and the car is moving at 25 mph or more, it sends a custom auto-reply message to incoming texts letting friends know you are driving and that you will get back to them when it’s safe.

Talking to passengers may not seem like a distraction, but it causes drivers to focus on conversation and not the road. Passengers should be taught the importance of being
well-mannered in the car, and drivers should avoid excessive talking, arguing and horseplay.

Drivers also should avoid applying make-up or brushing their hair while driving, and reading a map is a definite don’t. Use a GPS system or pull over to read a map.

Controls for music, mirrors, and air conditioning should be adjusted before the car is in motion. Passengers could also help by adjusting car controls for the driver on the road.

For more information, AT&T sponsors the It Can Wait campaign, dedicated to spreading awareness about the dangers of texting and driving. They ask drivers to pledge not to text and drive and to educate others about the texting and driving.

Their website, http://www.itcanwait.com/, contains videos and stories about texting while driving. It also has an interactive texting and driving simulator that will prove how difficult it can be to arrive alive when distracted driving.

Also, 95% of seniors and 71% of juniors said they had been guilty of distracted driving in the past month. Perhaps this is because three-quarters of the seniors and a little more than half of the juniors reported that they had used a handheld cellphone while driving. Numbers for hands-free devices were slightly better with around 42% of those drivers reporting their use.

A few also reported driving with pets or doing personal grooming behind the wheel.

The poll was conducted at www.surveymonkey.com, Oct. 28-Nov. 5.

Get involved!

The Maui Police Department teams up with police throughout Hawai‘i to target distracted driving. The combined police forces issued more than 20,000 citations for distracted driving in 2012.

Don’t wait to get a ticket, or worse, get in an accident. Instead, get involved.

To learn about becoming a safety advocate in your community, visit:
http://www.focusdriven.org/
http://decidetodrive.org/
http://aaos.org/
http://www.autoalliance.org/index.cfm
http://www.distraction.gov/
By JAYLIN KEKIWI, editor

Multitasking, according to Merriam Webster, is the performance of multiple things at one time – the keywords being at one time.

Earl Miller, professor of neuroscience at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that people aren’t actually capable of multitasking.

“You’re not paying attention to one [task] while doing another,” he said in an interview with National Public Radio in 2008. “They both involve communicating via speech or the written word, and so there’s a lot of conflict between the two of them.”

I come from a family of safety-conscious drivers, meaning that we rarely play music unless it’s played so quietly that the songs are practically muted, and conversations in the car are sparse.

My dad claims that distracted driving isn’t driving at all.

My friends, on the other hand, blare their favorite songs at ear-shattering volumes, text while cruising down the highway, and even apply their mascara on the way to the movies.

Senior Matthew Paschoal says that multitasking isn’t usually a problem for him.

“I always play music when I’m driving and sometimes I have to change the song,” he said. “It’s no big deal.”

Is it really “no big deal?” Interestingly enough, Kamehameha Maui students seem to agree with this statement.

In our recent survey, all 27 respondents said they would rate their driving 3 or higher on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest. Of these choices, 4 was the most common self-rating. Not too shabby for people who have only been driving for a year or two, eh?

These same people are also self-professed multitaskers.

I (along with Miller and other MIT researchers) have concluded this: multi-tasking while driving isn’t possible.

People can’t eat their favorite food without taking their eyes off the road – technically. They can’t check a Snapchat photo without peering down at their phones – technically.

No one multitasks – especially not while driving.

In fact, ultimately, you’re only putting yourself and others in danger.

Distraction.gov, a website that campaigns against distracted driving, states that you’re two times more likely to get into a crash if you’re texting while driving.

This statistic isn’t enough to stop a third of teenagers, ages 16-17, from texting when they’re on the road. Neither does it scare the 52% of teenagers who say they have talked on the phone while driving, according to a 2009 study by the Pew Research Center.

So why do we continue to do things like text while driving? Are we so obsessed with our food that we can’t hold off that bite of hamburger until we get home? Are we too connected to our phones to let that text message remain unread for a few more minutes? Are we so picky about our music that we can’t leave those dials alone for a half hour drive?

Anything that distracts the driver on the road is dangerous. That includes the so-called multitasking.

Maybe being in a multitasking generation isn’t as impressive as we think it is. Maybe, in all, we need to be more like generations before and focus on one thing at a time.

The American Automobile Association’s Foundation for Traffic Safety estimates that a person makes twenty decisions for every mile driven. Do you really want that one decision to change the radio station to be the one decision to regret for the rest of your life... if you have one?