

Just in Five Seconds: Dangers of Distracted Driving

Five seconds may seem like a literal blink of an eye, but it's enough time to destroy your life when you're inside a two ton hunk of metal at high velocity. Reading a text message while driving successfully distracts a driver for a minimum of five seconds. The average speed in the United States is about 55 mph. Taking five seconds to read a text in this time means a driver travels the length of an entire football field possibly without ever looking at the road (PADD). You could consider this a recipe for disaster. Technology has become such a huge part of our lives. It influences each and every one of us for the better but that is not always the case. The increasing amount of distracted driving have been one of the negative consequences. There are too many cases of distracted driving ending in fatalities. To drive safely on the road it takes one hundred percent of your full attention to what you are doing.

Distracted driving is defined as “the practice of driving a motor vehicle while engaged in another activity.” This translates to any activity that takes the driver's attention away from the road. Examples of distracted driving include texting, using a cell phone, taking a selfie, using a hand held device, adjusting the radio, watching a video, going through pictures, adjusting the navigation system, reading, talking to passengers, doing hair or makeup, and even daydreaming. Some of these examples might sound trivial, but they all contribute to distracted driving. There are three types of distracted driving: visual, manual and cognitive.

Visual distractions are when you take your eyes off the road. Manual distractions are when you take your hands off the wheel. Cognitive distractions are when you take your mind off the task of driving. Distracted driving is dangerous because not only does it affect the driver, but it endangers passengers and bystanders as well. Texting is a form of all three, which increases the chances of an accident by 23 times. Not only that, 1 out of 4 car accidents in the US are

caused by texting while driving, and texting while driving is 6 times more likely to get you in an accident than drunk driving (PADD)! The number one factor in automobile fatalities involving distracted drivers is the use of cell phones and texting. In 2017, 3,166 people were killed in distracted driving crashes which is 9% of all automobile fatalities (NHTSA). The spread of technology and the increase of distracted driving on our roadways have created an epidemic that is greatly affecting the population. Statistics clearly show how dangerous distracted driving can be. Although this is a problem for people of all ages, drivers under 20 years of age seem to make up a large portion of the distracted drivers. For drivers ages 15-19 involved in fatal car accidents, 21% were using a cell phone at the time of the cars (NHTSA).

Distracted driving is an important issue to me because it primarily affects my generation. The highest number of fatal crashes caused by distracted driving affect young adults more than any other age group. The reason for this is that our generation is the “technologically advanced” generation. Everyone seems glued to their electronics, even young children. These advances have become so deeply rooted in our society one cannot seem to go a single day without their phone or laptop or other electronic devices. People are constantly going on the Internet and checking their phones whether it is to text someone or post a status update. Personally, this issue not only affects my generation, it hits close to home as well.

A text that could ultimately cause someone to lose his or her lives. Not only is a life lost that day, but the lives of many others are affected: the families and loved ones of the killed are all impacted forever all because of what? A text? An email? A selfie? Think about it: would you pull out and check your phone during your license test? Or when you’ve have been stopped by a police officer for reckless driving? Remember that driving is a real world responsibility with consequences that may be irreversible. Keep this in mind when you are driving, that all it takes is

five seconds or less. The text can wait when it's your life at stake, and your phone will still be there when you safety park at your destination.

Citations

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812700>

Nikki's Foundation to End Distracting Driving (PADD)

<http://www.padd.org/index.php/en/the-facts>