

Distracted Driving

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5/25/2021

Safe driving should be practiced by anyone who sits behind a wheel. Teenagers have the highest crash and traffic violation rates in the country meaning they should practice safe driving from the moment they begin learning. Safe driving leads to safer streets and fewer accidents on the road.

In our current time texting or being on electronic devices while driving has become an increasing issue. Over one million car accidents in the US are caused by texting or calling while driving each year. Teenagers are the main cause of these car accidents; they tend to use their phones while driving more often than adults causing them to become distracted while driving. When you drive with a device in hand it leaves only one hand free on the steering wheel instead of two. This also causes the driver to become engrossed in their device and pay more attention to it than the road. Many cars are hit from behind by texting drivers and or they are hit by texting drivers who pass through red lights or stop signs.

To avoid texting while driving, you can turn on a setting on your phone while driving that doesn't allow calls to go through while in the car. This ensures that the driver will not feel distracted by notifications or taking calls. Another way to prevent accidents by texting and driving is to have the passenger in charge of the driver's phone. If they have an important call or text the passenger can respond to it. This also goes for something as simple as playing music through the aux; if the driver wants to change songs they can have the passenger do it and if they are alone they should plan out songs that they know they won't skip while driving. By

eliminating these distractions, the driver will be more focused on the road and what is happening around them.

Distracted driving is not only caused by texting or drinking, it can also be caused by distracting passengers that make the driver lose focus. Teens often drive with their friends in the car when hanging out, this means there are lively conversations and lots of interaction in the car. This can cause the driver to be more focused on what their friends are talking about instead of their own driving. Drivers may also pay less attention when the streets aren't busy. This makes the driver feel as if they don't need to be as aware of other cars on the road and often think they are "the only ones on the road". Driving while distracted is dangerous because it can lead to swerving, missing traffic lights, stop signs, or incoming cars.

This past October my friend and I were picked up from a small gathering by her older sister. On the way home, she was talking to her sister and wasn't paying attention causing her to drive through a red light, resulting in us getting hit on the car's passenger and driver's side. I got checked in the hospital due to chest pain and my friend's sister was in a neck brace for a few months and now has driving anxiety. Luckily there were no extreme injuries in our car or the others involved. Because of this accident, I pay more attention to my driving and the cars around me than I used to. Teenagers should always pay close attention when driving and not get distracted by things like passengers in the car or electronics.

28 percent of traffic-related deaths are caused by drunk driving, and about 15 percent are caused by teenagers driving drunk. Driving while intoxicated can lead to fatal outcomes such as serious injuries or death. Some side effects of alcohol or drugs can be impaired senses, slow reaction time, impulsive behavior, and mood changes. Underage drinking is more harmful to teenager's brains. They tend to ignore the effects they feel from alcohol and continue to drink,

this happens usually at parties where they feel they need to drink to have fun with their friends. These side effects will slow the senses and the driver becomes more careless when driving.

To prevent drunk driving you can go to a party or bar with a group of friends; within this group, there should be at least one person who won't drink and drives everyone home. Another way to prevent drunk driving is to call an uber, taxi, friend, or family member to pick you up from the place you are at. By taking precaution before drinking it can prevent later struggles when trying to get home.

Emotions are another factor that should be under control while driving, if not it can cause the driver to become distracted. When drinking, your emotions are also affected making them more difficult to control. Road rage is very common and it causes many irrational decisions on the driver's part. Anger is not the only dangerous feeling while driving, there is also anxiety, sadness, and distress. If you feel this way you should pull over, control those emotions, and wait until you feel ready to safely drive to your destination. If you really feel as if you can't control these feelings to drive yourself, call a relative or a friend that you feel comfortable with. The driver can then get around with a clear head without any emotions that cloud their judgment.

Driving while being distracted is very dangerous and puts everyone on the road at risk of accidents. Precautions should be taken by the driver to prevent themselves from being distracted by anything that affects their focus. Driving is something many teenagers look forward to and they need to make sure they practice safely no matter where they are or who they are with.