

Texting while driving essay

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In today's society people have become completely dependent on their cell phones. They make lives easier in many ways because of the useful features and functions that assist with communication within a complex society.

One of the features that have changed the way people communicate is the capability to send SMS (Short Message Service) messages better known as text messages. SMS allows people to type messages and exchange them between mobile phones better known as "texting". Unfortunately texting has also become a huge safety concern when it occurs while driving. While certain distractions while driving are inevitable, texting while driving requires serious attention and focus and thus should be outlawed in the US. The new Wireless Communications Device Law (effective January 1, 2009) makes it an infraction to write, send, or read text-based communication on an electronic wireless communications device, such as a cell phone, while driving a motor vehicle. (CA-DMV) This law is of course one which is enforced in California, however many other states have also outlawed texting while driving and the issue is being debated across the country. Currently in Florida, a proposed law banning texting while driving is being debated in the state legislature. "Heathers Law" as it is called would ban texting while driving and is named in honor of Heather Hurd who was killed by a truck driver who was texting behind the wheel.

(Redelmeier, 2009) There have been several well-publicized accidents in recent years that have been blamed on drivers' texting, including a crash that killed five teenage girls in western New York in 2007, and one that killed a 13-year-old bicyclist that same year in Massachusetts. Redelmeier, 2009) Locally it was recently reported that a Stockton man was killed in an accident

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while in North Sacramento. A California Highway Patrol spokesperson stated that the man lost control of his pickup truck while sending a text message on his cell phone. (News10) Along with news reports, many studies have been done on this subject as well. A 2006 University of Utah study found that people driving while texting on a cell phone were as impaired as if they were driving with a 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level. (Redelmeier, 2009) Another 2006 study by Liberty Mutual Insurance Group and SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) found that instant and text messaging while driving leads the list as the biggest distraction while driving for teens.

(Redelmeier, 2009) Texting while driving is thought by many to be more dangerous than talking on a cell phone while driving. While talking on a cell phone, a given user can still keep their eyes on the road and at least one hand free, whereas text keeps the user's eyes on and sometimes even both hands on the phone. On top of that a major issue is that "many people think that they can text while driving without a problem." (Redelmeier) Within the last couple of years cell phone technology has changed in favor of texting. Today the most popular phones are smart phones (I-phones, Blackberries) and many of the newer phones have a keyboard making it easier to enter letters into the phone. These PDA's (personal digital assistants) also allow internet access, picture and video messaging along with voice and text. Cell phones have essentially become very small hand held computers.

Imagine how dangerous it would be to drive on the same road as someone surfing the internet while driving. Opponents of anti-texting laws have argued that many activities such as eating or putting on makeup while

driving are distracting yet not outlawed. Opponents also argue that it is important for numerous reasons that communication not be cut off while driving and that texting could often be done safely, as in a traffic jam for instance. Despite this argument, drivers can still communicate using their cell phones by voice using a hands free device, so people are not completely cut off from communicating. (DMV-CA) AAA (American Automobile Association) has stated that any distraction that takes any drivers eyes off the road for more than two seconds doubles their risk of a crash, however, while certain distractions are inevitable, some distractions can be limited. Text messaging really requires focus and visual attention, whereas changing the radio or applying makeup utilizes less mental energy. Driving while distracted (by anything) is dangerous.

People are not only jeopardizing their own lives but they are also risking the lives of everyone else on the road. " Texting while driving is so obviously unsafe that it's hard to imagine that anyone would attempt it," said Sen. Joe Simitian, the Palo Alto Democrat who was the author of the Californian cell phone and text-messaging bills. The reason the entire US needs to outlaw texting while driving immediately is how distracting and dangerous it is.


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