

# Texting while driving in miami-dade county



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Introduction The invention of mobile technology is known to be a major breakthrough in the communication sector especially due to its flexibility in use. Before it, it was difficult to reach people especially while on transit i. e. using the wired telephone, which one had to remain in one place if he or she was anticipating an important call. With mobile telephones, it is now possible to call or text someone regardless of his or her location as they are portable and easy to move around with. However, this technology has become a major cause of accidental deaths on our roads as people get distracted by incoming calls or as a result of them dialing or texting while driving.

According to research, it has been noted that a person communicating on his mobile phone has a higher possibility of causing an accident than a drunken driver (Rader, 2008). This essay is a critical evaluation on the threat of mobile telephony on Miami Dade County, with respect to texting while driving.

#### Texting while driving in Miami-Dade County

The Miami Dade County was the first to legislate a law banning the use of mobile telephones while driving in Florida, which was passed in the year 2001 (Rader, 2008). According to the ordinance, first time violators were to be awarded a \$250 fine or opt to register for a refresher driving course while second time offenders were to receive a punishment of \$500. Most importantly, this act recognized the efficiency of these gadgets to communicate in cases of emergency and thus exceptions were made to allow their usage in cases such as reporting on fire, crime, irresponsible driving or other urgent occurrences. However, this law was preempted in 2002 thereby allowing drivers the liberty to decide on when and where to use the distractive gadgets (Rader, 2008).

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This has been the major setback in the county, which, according to statistics conducted by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, experienced a high rate of accident occurrence of approximately 118 fatal accidents per day in 2008 (Muller, 2010). Every time a bill is introduced for debate to restrict the use of hand held phones either to call or text messages while driving, it is either defeated at the committee stage or it fails completely to gain the support of the legislature, which applies to the whole state of Florida. Furthermore, the state of Florida has a preemption policy which does not allow its local authorities to legislate laws governing or prohibiting distracted driving (Miami-Dade County, n. d). As a result, the prerogative of controlling distracted driving especially texting has become a celebrity and public companies issue. People such as Oprah as an example has been conducting a massive campaign dubbed the no phone zone, trying to influence citizens to willingly refrain from engaging in the deadly vice (Rader, 2008). Private companies such as Disney have also taken the norm of banning their employees from texting while driving their company vehicles; subject to which violators face stiff penalties such as getting fired. However, the Miami Dade County in 2009 passed a resolution to ban county employees from texting while driving with the exception of when they are driving their own vehicles (Miami-Dade County, n. d).

### Conclusion

The county of Miami Dade and Florida state in general has not so far instituted a ban on texting while driving, apart from its county employees but as long as they are using county vehicles. This is a worrying status quo based on the fact that 30 states have already banned it. It is only in 2001 that such a law was brought to effect only to be preempted one year later.

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As a result, it has become the prerogative of individual companies to discipline their own employees but with a significantly high rate of fatal accidents, the county should think of joining other states in banning the vice but of course after the Preemption policy in Florida is lifted. Otherwise, people especially young and inexperienced drivers will continue to cause accidental deaths and injuries on the roads.

#### References

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