

U T A H

NETS

Network Of Employers
For Traffic Safety

CAN CELLPHONE USE INCREASE A DRIVER'S RISK OF CRASHING?



Cellphone use in the United States has quickly grown during the past decade. More than 84 percent of the U.S. population have wireless cellphone subscriptions, according to an industry trade group.

Do cellphones raise driver crash risk? Yes. Studies now link talking on a cellphone directly to crash risk. In particular, in 2005 a study of

drivers in Western Australia found cellphone users 4 times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. The study used cellphone billing records to verify phone use of crash-involved drivers. Increased risk was similar for males and females, drivers younger than 30 and those 30 and older, and hands-free and hand-held phones.

Are hands-free cellphones safer? No, at least not after the conversation begins. Studies used cellphone billing records to verify phone use during the time of the crash and found about a fourfold increase in crash risk associated with conversing on both hands-free and hand-held phones. The studies were unable to estimate crash risk from different types of hands-free devices. They could not determine whether there was any benefit to using hands-free devices while placing calls. Experimental research using driving simulators or instrumented vehicles indicates that conversations, whether on hand-held or hands-free phones, affected driving performance. Hands-free phones may eliminate some of the physical distraction of handling phones but not the cognitive

distraction that results from having a phone conversation.

How do cellphones affect driving? An institute review of more than 120 cellphone studies, about half of which used driving simulators or instrumented vehicles, found that nearly all reported that some measures of driver performance were affected by the cognitive distractions associated with cellphone tasks. Phone conversation tasks typically decreased driver reaction times and travel speeds and increased lane deviations and steering wheel movements. Some studies found that older drivers' performance is more affected by cellphone tasks, particularly their reaction time. Few studies included drivers younger than 18, and evidence is mixed on the effects of phone use for teens compared with adults. A few studies observed small samples of people during their everyday driving. One included drivers of 100 vehicles instrumented with video cameras and other monitoring technologies. Only a few serious crashes occurred, but researchers calculated that the odds of being in a near-crash or crash were higher when dialing a hand-held cellphone than when a cellphone wasn't being used.

Is talking on phones more distracting? Evidence is mixed. Some experimental studies found phone conversations more disruptive than talking with passengers or adjusting the radio. Another analysis of experimental studies found similar decrements in reaction time for conversation talks with passengers and with hand-held or hands-free phones. Two studies suggest that talking on phones or having a .08 percent blood alcohol concentration similarly affects some simulated driving tasks.

Insurance Institute for
Highway Safety July 2008



SAFETY IN AND AROUND CARS



Every summer you here more and more stories of children getting backed over or parents leaving their their kids in hot cars.

In the United States, from 2001-2003 an average of 229 children per year died after being struck by a vehicle in a driveway or

parking area. Close to half of children injured in these incidents were ages 1-4.

Already in 2008, there have been at least twenty deaths of infants and children after being left inside a hot vehicle. Last year there were a total of at least thirty-five such fatalities in the United States due to hyperthermia. Studies shows that these incidents can occur on days with relatively mild (i.e., 70 degrees F) temperatures.

Spot the Tot is a nationwide program that was created here in Utah by the Safe Kids Coalition. The program teaches parents, drivers, caregivers and children new safety tips to increase awareness about

small children sharing the same space as vehicles. It is designed to increase awareness and reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities that occur in driveways, parking lots, sidewalks, and in the car itself.

Follow these three easy tips to help keep children safer around cars:

- ◆ Walk completely around your vehicle before getting in. Teach your children to move away when a vehicle starts.
- ◆ Have children stand in a place where they are in full view. Be aware of young children.
- ◆ Parents, caregivers, and all adults need to be supervising children when near the yard, driveway, or parking lots.
- ◆ Roll down your window so you will be able to hear what is happening outside your vehicle.
- ◆ Owners of SUVs, trucks, and vans need to take extra care to avoid hitting or running over a child.
- ◆ Pay attention in parking lots. If you ever see a child or pet in a car, call police (911).
- ◆ NEVER leave a child in a vehicle. Leave a purse, phone, or coat in the back seat to remind you to get your child out of the car when you arrive.

Source: Safe Kids Utah

Move Over and Slow Down for Emergency Vehicles

Most drivers know they should move over and slow down when they see a stopped emergency response vehicle on the side of the road.

But what some drivers do not know is that in the past five years, many states have adopted laws that penalize drivers for not obeying "move-over" laws. In Georgia, drivers who violate the state's move-over law will be punished with a \$500 fine. In Tennessee, a violation of the law is a Class B misdemeanor punishable up to 30 days, or both. Violators of Illinois' move-over law, known as "Scott's Law," can be fined \$10,000 and have their driver's license suspended for up to two years.

According to NHTSA, as of January 2008, 40 states have instituted these move-over laws intended to protect fire, emergency medical services and law enforcement personnel. Provisions of the law vary from state to state, but generally motorists must vacate the lane closest to an emergency vehicle to prevent a vehicular crash and injury of emergency workers.

you can recognize audible and visual signals made by emergency vehicles.

- ◆ If you are unable to move over or change lanes safely, slow down to 20 mph below the posted speed limit and approach with caution- unless otherwise directed by emergency workers at the scene of a crash.
- ◆ Do not stop in the roadway or block the flow of traffic.
- ◆ If an emergency vehicle is approaching, motorists must shift lanes to move away from any intersection and stop until the emergency has passed.

Source: Traffic Safety 2008

Free Materials Available

Drive Friendly Magnets
NETS Incentives
Traffic Safety Posters and Brochures

To request free materials, contact Hollie Davis at (800) 933-5943 ext. 303 or through e-mail at hdavis@utahsafetycouncil.org



◆ Be alert while driving so

Legislators Want Stronger Trucker Drug Testing Programs, Oversight and Enforcement

Days after a government report revealed major problems in current drug and alcohol testing for commercial motor vehicle drivers, three congressmen announced plans to draft legislation to address loopholes.

Expressing shock and discouragement over the report, representative James L. Oberstar, D-MN, chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee; Peter A. DeFazio, D-OR, chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit; and John L. Mica, R-FL, said they are pursuing legislation to create a national registry of drug and alcohol test results. The legislation's goal is to prevent CMV drivers who test positive for drugs or alcohol from hopping from state to state to obtain a commercial driver's license- an issue undercover investigators with the Government Accountability Office discovered and highlighted in their report.

GAO undercover investigators also found:

- ◆ Many CMV drivers are not part of a drug testing program.
- ◆ An unknown number of drug users manage to avoid detection by successfully adulterating or manipulating tests.
- ◆ 10 of 24 CMV driver drug-testing sites did not ask an undercover investigator posing as a driver to empty his pants pockets as is required to ensure he was not carrying urine drug test adulterants or substitutes.
- ◆ The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration does not conduct regular oversight over collectors and other drug testing service agents, nor does the agency have the authority to impose civil penalties.
- ◆ A number of products are widely available on the Internet for drivers to purchase and successfully manipulate urine drug tests.

DeFazio said he plans to look at banning products that are created to manipulate drug testing. "We must close loopholes in testing procedures, and we need to ensure that drug abusers aren't driving big trucks on the road," DeFazio said during a May news conference. "If a driver fails a drug test, there must be a system in place that ensures they receive

adequate treatment before allowed to return to duty."

Bill Graves, president and CEO for the Arlington, VA-based American Trucking Associations, has said he supports the national drug-testing registry and wants Congress to direct federal agencies to initiate a rulemaking that would allow testing of hair samples- a method said to be less invasive and able to detect illegal drug use over a longer period of time.

According to GAO, about 5,500 fatalities and 160,000 injuries result annually from crashes involving large trucks and buses. Vehicle problems and driver behavior such as speeding or fatigue are most frequently cited, but studies show drug and alcohol use also contribute to a number of crashes, GAO investigators said.

Source: Traffic Safety August 2008





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NETS NEWS

If you would like to submit items for use in the newsletter, send them to:

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