

# Role Models for the Road

# Parent Tips

## DISTRACTED DRIVERS

### PART IV: *Summing up the Research*

AUGUST 2007

Cell phones play an integral role in our society. However, the convenience they offer must be judged against the hazards they pose. Inattentive driving accounted for 6.4 percent of crash fatalities in 2003 — the latest data available — according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

There is a national trend now underway toward regulating and prohibiting in-vehicle devices that limit the attention of both young and experienced drivers.

#### **Consider these as useful indications of this trend.**

- Motorists who use cell phones while driving are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves, according to a study of drivers in Perth, Australia, conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The study found that injury crash risk didn't vary with type of phone.
  - A study by researchers at the University of Utah, published in the summer 2006 issue of *Human Factors*, the quarterly journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, concludes that talking on a cell phone while driving is as dangerous as driving drunk, even if the phone is a hands-free model.
  - A September 2004 study from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that drivers using hands-free cell phones had to redial calls 40 percent of the time, compared with 18 percent for drivers using hand-held sets, suggesting that hands-free sets may provide drivers with a false sense of ease.
  - An earlier study by researchers at the University of Utah found that motorists who talked on hands-free cell phones were 18 percent slower in braking and took 17 percent longer to regain the speed they lost when they braked.
  - Washington became the first state in the union to ban the practice of texting with a cell phone while driving.
  - In May 2007, Washington also joined New York, New Jersey, the District of Columbia, Connecticut and (beginning in 2008) California in outlawing the practice of speaking on a hand-held cell phone while driving.
- In January 2007 the Center for Auto Safety filed a petition with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration asking the agency to restrict the use of systems that allow motorists to have wireless access for telephoning and entertainment purposes as well as access to navigational aids and security features. The petition calls for regulators to draft rules prohibiting the use of built-in systems while the vehicle is moving. The group expressed concerns that allowing motorists to handle personal affairs while driving would lead to more traffic accidents.
  - According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as of November 2006 14 states had passed laws banning or restricting young drivers from using cell phones.
  - As many as 40 countries may restrict or prohibit the use of cell phones while driving. Countries reported to have laws related to cell phone use include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Botswana, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe. Most countries prohibit the use of hand-held phones while driving. Drivers in the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom may use cell phones but can be fined if they are involved in crashes while using the phone. Drivers in the United Kingdom and Germany also can lose insurance coverage if they are involved in a crash while talking on the phone.

Driving takes our undivided attention. Any device that interferes with our ability to safely drive on our highways is a serious infringement on the rights of all of our fellow citizens who share the road.

**PARTNERS FOR SAFE  
TEEN DRIVING**  
A COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVE

For additional information go to  
**[www.SafeTeenDriving.org](http://www.SafeTeenDriving.org)**  
Prince William County Public Schools  
Department of Motor Vehicles