

Role Models for the Road

Parent Tips

DISTRACTED DRIVERS PART II

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Mobile-phone use while [driving](#) is common but controversial. According to "Life Styles and Past Times" by Jenny Tesar, in 1984 only 40,000 people used cell phones.

The latest study from Scarborough Research, the nation's leader in local, regional and national consumer information, shows a 29 percent growth rate for cell phone ownership over the past two years with almost two-thirds (62 percent) of American adults owning 100 million cell phones.

The number of cellular phones sold in the United States in 1995 was higher than the national birth rate for the same period!

There is no question that there are numerous benefits to cellular phone use. Two-thirds of new cellular phone owners listed their main reason for purchasing a cellular phone as a security measure. Nearly half of all cellular phone owners have used their car phones to report car trouble, medical emergencies, crimes and drunk or reckless drivers.

The research however is piling up though about the potential health risks of using the cell phones while driving:

- The risk of having a traffic accident while using a cellular phone is the same as that while driving drunk (NEJM, 2/13/97)
- Cell phone users are four to five **HUNDRED** percent more likely to get into traffic accidents than those who do not use them (NEJM, 2/13/97)
- There is a nine-fold increase in the risk of fatality given the use of a cellular telephone (Violanti, 1998, case-control study of data from 223,137 traffic crashes in Oklahoma from 1992 - 1995).

- Violanti and Marshall studied the association between cellular telephone use and **EIGHTEEN** other driver inattention factors and traffic crash risk. Results indicated that talking for more than 50 minutes per month on a cellular phone in a vehicle was associated with a 5.59 fold increased risk of a traffic crash over other factors.
- The Insurance Research Council's Public Attitude Monitor showed that four out of five survey respondents (82%) agree that using cell phones in cars distracts drivers and increases the likelihood of accidents; 84% of cell phone owners agree.
- The use of cell phones while vehicle is in motion has already been banned in Australia, Spain, Israel, Portugal, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Switzerland, Great Britain, Singapore, Taiwan, Sweden, Japan, and Austria. Driving with a cell phone was banned in Japan after a study found the number of traffic accidents related to the phones increased by 11 percent from 1997 to 1998. In the month after the law went into effect, the number of accidents caused by drivers using cell phones fell by about 75 percent

It is apparent that the use of this technology seriously impedes our ability to drive effectively.

The use of cell-phones is here to stay. The challenge of our times is to balance the benefits and the risks. Responsible use of the cell phone must become a priority as parents help their teens adjust to the rigors of driving.

You'll survive a missed phone call; you might not survive a collision!

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