Distracted Driving

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More than 1.6 million crashes are caused by cell phone use and texting while driving each year.
Motor Vehicle Crashes

- No. 1 cause of death
- An estimated 39,000 to 46,000 people killed in crashes every year
- More than 2.2 million injuries from crashes in 2008

Distractions now join alcohol and speeding as leading factors in fatal and serious injury crashes.
Distracted Driving

• In 2008, 28% of all crashes attributable to cell phones
  – 1.6 million crashes
  – 645,000 injuries

• Cell phone users 4x as likely to crash
Millions of People are Talking While Driving

- 11% of drivers at any point during the day are on cell phones
- 81% of drivers admit to talking on cell phone while driving:
  - 74% of Boomers
  - 88% of Gen X
  - 89% of Gen Y
  - 62% of Teen Drivers
Millions of People are Texting While Driving

- 18% of drivers admit to texting while driving:
  - 4% of Boomers
  - 15% of Gen X
  - 39% of Gen Y
  - 36% of Teen Drivers
How Cell Phones Distract

• Visual – Eyes off road
• Mechanical – Hands off wheel
• Cognitive – Mind off driving

**CHALLENGE:** Drivers don’t understand or realize that talking on a cell phone distracts the brain and takes focus away from the primary task of driving.
The Problem

• Hands-free seen as solution and mistakenly believed to be safer than handheld

• People recognize the risk of talking on handheld and texting more than the risk of hands-free

• Most legislation focuses on only handheld devices or texting

• All state laws and some employer policies allow hands-free devices

Hands-free devices offer no safety benefit when driving.
What is a Hands-Free Device?

- Headset that communicates via wire or wireless connection to cell phone
- Factory-installed or aftermarket feature built into vehicle (voice recognition)
Inattention Blindness

• A type of cognitive distraction
  – “looking” but not “seeing”

• Hands-free drivers less likely to see:
  – High and low relevant objects
  – Visual cues
  – Exits, red lights and stop signs
  – Navigational signage
  – Content of objects
Inattention Blindness

A narrowed scope

Where drivers not using a hands-free cell phone looked.

Where drivers using a hands-free cell phone looked.

Source: Transport Canada
Multitasking: Impairs Performance

• We can walk and chew gum safely because it is not a cognitively-demanding task

• But even cell phone-using pedestrians act unsafely. They are less likely to:
  
  – Look for traffic before stepping into street
  – Look at traffic while crossing street
  – Notice unusual objects placed along path
Cell Phone: Driver Risks

• Inattention blindness

• Slower reaction/response times

• Problems staying in lane
Passenger Conversations

- Adult passengers share awareness of driving situation, a safety benefit

- Front seat passengers reduce risk of crashing by 38% compared to cell phone conversations

- Adults with passengers have lower crash rates than adults without passengers
  - Not true for novice teen drivers
Prevention Steps

• Widespread education
• Corporate cell phone bans
• Legislation
• Law enforcement
• Technology

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