

What's So Important: Distracted Driving & The It Can Wait Campaign

In 2012, 3,328 people lost their lives due to distracted driving accidents, states distraction.gov, the official US government website for distracted driving.¹ This site discusses the 3 main categories of being distracted while driving:

- Manual - taking your hands off the wheel
- Visual - taking your eyes off the road
- Cognitive - taking your focus off the road

All three of these come into play when someone texts while driving. In fact, the site gives another compelling statistic. In order to text while driving you would have to take your eyes, hands and mind off driving for 4.6 seconds. If you are traveling at 55 miles per hour, that would be like driving the entire length of a football field without paying attention.

At Risk

Of teen drivers surveyed, 97% of them admitted that they know texting while driving is dangerous.² So pretty much all teen drivers are well aware that it is not a smart thing to do, and could get them or someone else serious injured, yet, 43% of them admit to doing it. Even worse than that, is the example being sent by adults. 49%, nearly half of all drivers and 6% more than just the teens, admitted to texting while driving.

It Can Wait

The big push right now is to convince our children that the message being sent to them can wait. Whoever is texting them, whether it is a parent or a friend, wants an answer, not a death. Nothing is that important that it is worth risking your life. The website itcanwait.com was setup for young drivers to pledge to not text while driving. It is connected to Facebook, so that their pledge is posted to all their friends. They have gotten young celebrities to endorse the mission. We know how impressionable kids are to do what is cool and what their friends and celebrities are doing. So the design behind the campaign and the site is to show them that their friends are not texting and driving through Facebook and that celebrities like Demi Lovato, One Direction and Gabby Douglas are pledging as well.

Other Tools

The goal of the It Can Wait campaign is to educate drivers about the facts. Other information designed at increasing drivers knowledge can be found all over the internet. Sites like distraction.gov give a state by state breakdown of distracted driving laws. For example, in California, it is a primary law, one that that you can get pulled over for, to not use a phone in handsfree mode and to text while driving. There are also sites like driving-tests.org that give state by state driving tests. For California, the site gives 40 free questions from the California DMV,

and you can share your results on Facebook.

The mobile companies are getting involved too. AT&T, who was behind the It Can Wait campaign, got Verizon, Sprint and T-Mobile to join forces to get the word out.³ The makers of the devices are getting involved too. HTC, Samsung and Pantech are pre-loading AT&T's DriveMode app on their AT&T devices. The DriveMode app can sense when the phone is moving at more than 25 miles per hour and disable the ability to receive texts and emails. It can even send an auto-reply to let the sender know that the person is driving and will respond when it is safe.

The combination of learning the facts about driving laws, hearing from celebrities and your friends that they will not drive and text and having tools like the DriveMode app that can auto reply while you are driving, are just the start. Talking to your children about safety and making sure they use these tools can help stop this deadly trend. Plus, keep watching for other tools in the future, such as Apple's plans to integrate mobile devices into car displays, as cnet.com reports⁴, or Esurance's teen driver monitoring program, which allows parents to limit calls and texting while driving with a free installed device, according to The Detroit News.⁵

1. <http://www.distraction.gov>
2. <http://www.att.com/gen/press-room?pid=23181>
3. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/may/14/business/la-fi-texting-20130514>
4. http://reviews.cnet.com/8301-13746_7-57588564-48/apple-promises-ios-maps-messaging-integration-in-cars/
5. <http://www.detroitnews.com/article/20131218/METRO05/312180107>