



April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

ThinkFirst Urges Distracted Drivers to Put Down the Phone When Driving

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Distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation's roads. In support of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation is encouraging drivers to put down the phone and remember, *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* Local law enforcement departments across the country will be partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for a high-visibility enforcement effort to raise public awareness of distracted drivers and enforce distracted-driving laws.

NHTSA Distracted Driving Statistics

- Between 2012-2017, nearly 20,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver, with 3,166 people killed in 2017 alone.
- Millennials have become the biggest texting-while-driving offenders, using cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel.
- Since 2007, young drivers 16- to 24-years-old have been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers.
- In 2017, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) driving crashes died when those teen drivers were distracted at the times of the crashes.
- Female drivers are most at-risk for being involved in a fatal crash involving a distracted driver.

"Distracted driving is a national epidemic," said Susan Crotty, Program Development Manager, Traffic Safety, for the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. "Driving is one of the most dangerous activities most of us do each day. Research has shown you should not multitask while driving because the busier your brain is the less it can focus on the task at hand, which is driving. Beginning April 11th, you will see increased law enforcement efforts to remind and educate drivers: if you text and drive, you will pay."

An analysis by the AAA Traffic Safety Research Foundation found that while more than 80 percent of drivers believed it was completely unacceptable for a motorist to text behind the wheel, more than a third of those same drivers admitted to reading text messages while operating a passenger motor vehicle themselves.

“Driving under the influence of electronics is a choice,” said Crotty. “When you drive, you have one responsibility - drive safely and responsibly. The bottom line: if your attention is anywhere other than completely focused on the road, you’re driving distracted. Don’t do it.”

Drive Safe Every Trip

The ThinkFirst Foundation and NHTSA urge you to put your phone down while behind the wheel. If you need to text, pull over. If you’re driving, follow these steps for a safe driving experience:

- If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
- Designate your passenger as your “designated texter.” Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving. Cell phone use can be habit-forming.
- Waiting at an intersection is part of driving; it is not a safe or allowed time to text.
- Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. Break the cycle. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the mission to prevent brain, spinal cord and other traumatic injuries through education, research and advocacy. The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) founded ThinkFirst in 1986 for the purpose of providing their injury prevention programs promoting safe behaviors, including basic safety, traffic safety and concussion awareness for students, falls prevention for older adults, and infant safety for new parents. ThinkFirst chapters, based in hospitals and healthcare centers throughout the U.S. and internationally, provide more than 7,000 presentations annually to schools and community groups.

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