

Standardize Regulations For Texting & Driving

Posted on November 2, 2018

Introduction

It happens very quickly. One moment you are driving to your destination, the next, you're lying on the ground injured or dead. What could have caused this accident? You follow the rules of the road: seatbelts, mirrors correctly positioned, hands on the wheel, eyes on the road. However, not everyone drives like you. The other driver, the one responsible for your injuries or death, doesn't follow the rules. In fact, that individual was too busy checking their phone to realize they were about to run a red light and cause a serious, or fatal, car accident. Incidents like these could be avoided if regulations were set and enforced country-wide. However, the problem that this country has is that each state has different laws pertaining to the use of mobile devices when driving. This can be confusing to motorists as they travel from state to state. For this reason, all states should have the same regulations about the use of mobile devices while operating a mobile vehicle.

Matti Makkonen, a Finnish engineer of mobile communications, is known as the founding "Father of SMS," who first introduced the concept of texting in 1984 (Denholm, 2015). However, the first message wasn't sent until December 3, 1992, in the United Kingdom. Since then, the amount of text messages sent grew tremendously from 1999 to 2005, showing a growth of 1 billion to 30 billion in that time frame. Once the United States was able to implement this new technology with mobile devices, texting numbers went from 30 million sent in 2001 to 7.3 billion in 2005. By the year 2008, over 14 billion messages were being sent monthly (Stewart, 2008). There are several reports which show that there are more mobile phones in the United States than there are people.

From the available statistics, it is evident that there is a worsening problem, and the bill has yet to be passed to forbid the use of mobile phones while driving. There is yet to be a bill passed across the United States. Legislative action regarding the use of cell phones during driving varies a lot in the country. Ten states have already passed laws to eliminate phone usage while driving. Other states have not passed any such bill because they believe that passage of laws like these will impinge on their liberty. However, the states have passed such bills to reduce the number of road accidents. Due to the variation in the state's legislation regarding the use of mobile phones while driving, it is possible that a person from a state where the use of cellular devices is forbidden will unintentionally break the law because of his lack of knowledge about the banning in a particular state. Therefore, standardizing the law to prohibit texting and calling while driving across the United States would assist in alleviating the problem.

Problem

Young adults are prone to use mobile devices while operating a motor vehicle. With numerous social outlets such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Tinder, it seems hard not to see any of them on their phones, even when driving. It's important for them to stay connected with their friends through these social media applications. However, what they fail to understand are the risks they take any time they get behind the wheel of a car with their phones in their hands. It is a dangerous distraction since that individual is focused more on what text they just received rather than on the road they travel. The problem with young adults, and even some veteran drivers, is that they believe they are not distracted by their mobile devices. Since Bluetooth is an option for smartphones to be hands-free, many users believe that it keeps them focused on the road and not their phones, which is untrue (Huffman, 2013).

A person who's been driving for over ten years could be considered a veteran driver. They are what can be considered know-it-alls. The type of drivers that always say, "I know what I'm doing" or "I got this." We've all heard someone say this before when it comes to driving, but do they? Do they "have it" or "got this?" Maybe. They are so used to multitasking in their cars that they believe they've mastered the art. What they fail to realize, just as young adult drivers, is that their perception is not 100% when they are putting on makeup, talking on the phone, looking through their briefcase for paperwork, drinking coffee, etc. "In 2016, there were almost 50,000 crashes involving distracted driving in Florida, which is more than five crashes every hour" (Rhodes, 2017).

The final issue with the operation of mobile devices while driving is the laws that are in place. They vary from state to state, and no one memorizes every regulation for each state. For example, the state of Florida does not have any regulations for texting and driving, which is surprising since accidents are on the rise everywhere pertaining to texting and driving. The Florida Highway Patrol offers tips to drivers to avoid traffic tickets and maintain a clean driving record, but there is no regulation. However, if they find that you were distracted by your phone, you will receive a ticket (Florida Drivers Distracted, 2018). On the other hand, it is against the law to use a mobile device while driving. It is against the law to write, text, or email in the state of Maryland (Motor Vehicle Administration, 2014). Imagine driving from state to state, and you are pulled over because you are using your phone and receive a ticket. An officer is not going to waive a ticket just because you didn't know their laws. This is where we have an issue with state-to-state regulations on the use of cell phones.

The underlying issue we have is with the regulations in place for the use of cell phones while driving. Teens want to keep their peers up to date on their day-to-day activities and feel it's important to share with them immediately; it can't wait. Adults do not feel their perception is altered since they've been driving for many years and think they have everything under control. Finally, we have various regulations in each state, which can confuse individuals about what they can and cannot do when operating a vehicle and using their phones. For this reason, cellphone regulations should be

standardized for all states in America.

Solution To Problem And Advantages

We know that when driving, there should be a complete focus on the road. You never know when the person in another car may hit their brakes, run a stop sign or red light, or swerve to avoid a collision with another driver. During driving, a person needs to focus on the road and both hands on the steering wheel. Young drivers are constantly tempted to check their mobile phones, which makes them lose their focus on the road and grip on the steering wheel. With the evolution of technology in general and cell phones in particular, we have been able to continuously communicate with family, friends, or employees via text anytime we need to. This is where we have a problem. We begin to focus more on our phones, and as a result, there have been thousands of accidents on the road due to texting and driving or [distracted driving](#). However, there are solutions to this problem that can play a significant role in reducing accidents on the roads. The first solution is implementing a program that will allow your phone to detect when a person may be texting and driving. The idea is to have your phone sensors collect information that allows it to detect whether you are texting or driving. It will sense the user's keystrokes, the way the user is holding the phone, and vehicle speed. The phone will analyze the information to determine if there is a pattern showing if a person may be texting and driving (Liu, Cao, Tang, He, & Wen, 2017). If this method can be implemented into our technology, it may prevent numerous incidents from occurring. Additionally, most smartphones come with a drive-mode application. Once you are in your vehicle, you simply turn it on. It detects that you are moving and sends text messages to individuals who have sent you a message or even called to let them know you're unable to respond because you are driving (Herron, 2016).

In the above picture, the left screen shows the layout of the app that blocks incoming calls and texts to keep the driver from distraction, and the right screen shows the text that the application will automatically send to the caller.

The second solution is to use different gadgets made by Text Ninja. Text Ninja is a company that offers many solutions to lessen distractions while driving. The first solution to the problem provided by the company is the use of hands-free devices such as Bluetooth. The use of hands-free is common nowadays, with which you can listen to incoming calls, allowing you to keep both your hands on the steering wheel and your eyes on the road while you are operating a motor vehicle. Another solution to distraction is phone docks. Cell phone dock allows the individual to prop their phone on a car mount so they can view the screen to see who is calling, freeing any hand from the steering wheel. Most people use these for navigational purposes while traveling. Some people do not need to look since the GPS system speaks to them, telling them turn-by-turn directions. Finally, the Text Ninja has a tool that connects directly to your vehicle, which they call the Connected Car Bluetooth driving kit. It allows your car to speak to the device, allowing you to focus on driving and not what's on your phone (Solutions to Texting and Driving, 2016). Moreover, this device offers rewards when you drive text-free. Some offers include concert tickets, restaurant freebies, and coffee. You could even receive

sporting event tickets. (Solutions to Texting and Driving, 2016). Everyone loves free stuff, so having this device can be beneficial.

The third solution for distracted driving ([texting and driving](#)) is implementing standardized laws across the United States. Everyone would be on the same page and know the regulations. As stated prior, traveling from state to state can be confusing to many. There is no person who memorizes every state mobile device regulations before they get on the road, so chances are if they are pulled over, they may or may not be expecting a ticket or even jail. Our law officials have the power to change these laws and make them the same across the board. There will be no confusion for any person or officer of the law. Simply put, it should be illegal. We don't need an expert to tell us that texting while driving is dangerous. It has been proven repeatedly by many researchers.

The most important solution to the problem is the driver's resistance to check his mobile phone while driving. Drivers should be educated about the consequences of [using mobile phones](#). They should be taught that if it is really important to text or attend a call, they should pull over to receive the call instead of talking on the phone and driving at the same time.

Disadvantages

The disadvantage of the first solution to the problem is that the application that can detect that the person is driving with the help of a different sensor is that it is up to the user to turn it on. The person who knows that texting while driving is dangerous and has enough self-control not to touch the mobile phone to check text messages would not have to use such an application. If a person does not want to check his mobile phone, he will not check it, but if a person cannot resist the temptation to use a mobile phone while driving, he will not tape to turn on the application. Another disadvantage of that solution is that if a person forgets to turn on the application before starting to drive, he will turn it on while driving, which will be just another excuse to touch the mobile phone.

The Text Ninja provides multiple ways to drive without any distractions, but all the gadgets have one or two negative sides. For instance, if you want to attend a call by using a hands-free or Bluetooth device, you will have to use at least one hand to put the hands-free, which will also take away the focus from the road. Moreover, studies have also revealed that listening to the calls even by using hands free divides person's attention, therefore, he loses the focus (Saifuzzaman, Haque, Zheng, & Washington, 2015).

The problem with the use of a cell phone dock is that it displays the screen in front of the person who is driving and continually distracts him because he is tempted to look at the screen, though you do not have to use your hands to pick up and check the phone. Moreover, the driver will put or retrieve a cell on the cell phone dock while driving, which will also distract him from driving and may cause an accident (Meza, 2015).

For interfacing with the phone, the Connected Car Bluetooth requires direct input from the driver to

start. Drivers may find these initial directions too hectic to give, and they may choose not to use the system to lessen their distractions while driving. To motivate the drivers to use the system, they have some offers for every text-free drive, but the driver may forget about the offer when he gets an important text message or call. In addition, the driver may not use the system because the offer did not attract the driver; after all, it depends upon the self-control and choice of the driver (Meza, 2015).

Using cell phones is no more dangerous than putting on makeup, eating, or listening to music. Therefore, making the use of handheld devices illegal cannot guarantee fewer accidents on the roads. In order to decrease the number of accidents, in addition to standardizing regulations for texting while driving in all states, the authorities should prohibit any extra activity by the driver, such as eating, putting on makeup, and listening to music. Any extra activity distracts the driver as much as the texting (Irwin, Monement, & Desbrow, 2015).

Conclusion

This chart illustrates the number of car crashes that have occurred from 2010 to 2015, with 2015 being the deadliest, killing 476 people (Richter, 2017). These could have been prevented if state laws banned the use of mobile devices. Until law officials take a good look at the statistics, these incidents will continue to increase over the years. This problem can be solved if law officials make it illegal to use cell phones across the states.

One of the most important factors you learn during driver's education is the placement of your hands. Hand placement gives you leverage; it allows you to have better control of your vehicle. If one hand isn't on the steering wheel, you will not have full control should an incident occur. If we ban handheld devices, it may eliminate the possibility of injuring or killing another motorist, as well as reduce the amount of crashes that occur.

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