

# Play it Safe

## Texting While Driving has GTG!!!

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GTG is text shorthand for "got to go."

"Texting while driving is more dangerous than driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol."

As extreme as it may sound, don't be too quick to dismiss this statement as urban myth. There is compelling evidence that cell phone use – particularly texting – should be saved for times when you and your loved ones are not driving.

### Worse than drunk-driving?

A study conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) in Berkshire, UK, showed reaction times to be 35 percent slower in drivers who were texting. In comparison, earlier studies found reaction times to be 12 percent slower in drivers who reached the legal limit of alcohol consumption, and 21 percent slower in drivers under the influence of marijuana<sup>1</sup>.

Drivers are also far more likely to drift or swerve laterally while sending text messages. In fact, texting drivers varied their lateral position (swerved) 91 percent more often than drivers who were not texting, according to the TRL study. This makes texting drivers more likely to leave their traffic lanes and can put them in the path of other vehicles.

It's important to point out that any form of impaired driving is dangerous.

### The ultimate distraction.

Texting takes over almost every sense required for driving. It takes your eyes and mind off the road, and at least one hand off of the steering wheel. On top of that, it takes more than twice as long – an average of 63 seconds, compared to 22 seconds when sent from a desk – to text a message while driving<sup>1</sup>. Imagine driving for a full minute with your eyes closed and one hand on the wheel!

And the argument that cell phones are no more distracting than a conversation with a passenger? It doesn't hold up according to a recent study at the University of Utah. Half of the drivers in this study missed their intended exit on a simulated highway while talking on cell phones (not texting). Only 3 of 24 missed their exit while conversing with a passenger<sup>2</sup>.

### Texting is on the rise.

According to the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association, more than 600 billion text messages were sent last year, almost 4 times the number of texts sent in 2006. Studies show that 20 percent of drivers and 40 percent of cell phone users under 30 admit texting while driving<sup>3</sup>.

### Laws are changing.

Laws on cell phone use vary by state and locality. Some states ban use only for certain drivers, while some have made hand-held cell phone use as well as texting primary offenses for all drivers. For detailed information on cell phone laws, go to <http://www.iihs.org/laws/cellphonelaws.aspx>. Or, contact your local law enforcement.

More information on texting and driving can be found online at:

<http://www.iihs.org/search.aspx?q=texting&x=10&y=8>

<http://www.sadd.org/press/textingadvisory.htm>

[http://parentingteens.suite101.com/article.cfm/en\\_driver\\_menace\\_textmessaging](http://parentingteens.suite101.com/article.cfm/en_driver_menace_textmessaging)

[http://www.racfoundation.org/files/textingwhile\\_drivingreport.pdf](http://www.racfoundation.org/files/textingwhile_drivingreport.pdf)

<sup>1</sup> Transport Research Laboratory, The Effect Of Text Messaging On Driver Behaviour, 2008

<sup>2</sup> American Psychological Association, Passenger and Cell Phone Conversations in Simulated Driving, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Q & As: Cellphones and driving, 2009; and also U.S. News & World Report, Outlawing Text Messaging While Driving, 2009

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