

# Texting While Driving:

## Beware of Dangers, Establish Safe Habits



BY CHARLIE HALFEN

Even the most safety-conscious and thoughtful people have succumbed to the temptation to multitask while driving, and the latest and most perilous of these activities is texting.

Texting while driving has become one of the most discussed and discouraged activities for a good reason—it is one of the most profoundly dangerous distractions that can cause a driver not only to reduce necessary and continuous hazard-scanning, but to take his eyes off of the road and hands off of the steering wheel. Drivers who are texting can even enter into a state where they temporarily forget that they are driving.

A typical text-oriented distraction takes about five seconds, which on average translates into about 100 yards of travel. Simply put, this is a potentially lethal distraction and it is responsible for a significant rise in traffic accidents, serious injury and fatalities, according to research.

The chances of hurting oneself and others goes up markedly because of texting, much more so than other distractions like talking on the phone, eating, putting on makeup and glancing at written material like a magazine. This is because texting requires a greater degree of mental concentration and physical activity. Consider the statistics:

- The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reported in a 2008 study that one in seven drivers admits to text messaging while driving.
- The same study reports that younger people are overwhelmingly more likely than older people to text message while driving—nearly half of survey respondents aged 18 to 24 admit doing so, whereas fewer than 5 percent of drivers aged 45 and older admit doing so.
- The National Safety Council determined that of the 1.6 million accidents per year, texting will contribute to 28 percent of them.

- Texting raises the probability of accidents by roughly 23 times.
- Reaction time is reduced by roughly 35 percent while writing or reading text messages.
- Many experts consider texting more dangerous than driving under the influence of marijuana or alcohol.

Many states have passed legislation prohibiting this activity, and more states are considering it. Yet laws related to cell phone use in moving vehicles are often ignored. It is critical that everyone wake up to this very dangerous activity which puts them, other drivers and pedestrians at risk.

So what does one do when there is such temptation to communicate with friends, family and colleagues instantly while driving? Much of the solution rests on texting-while-driving-abstinence. Being aware of the dangers and committing to not texting while driving is the answer. Give serious consideration to the following:

- Pledge to not text while driving, period. Your life and the lives of others depend on it.
- Think about all of the texts you want to read and send, and execute them before putting the car into gear.
- If a text comes in while driving, resist the temptation to look at it. If the urge to look at it or to respond is irresistible, take the precaution to pull over in a safe place to look at the message and respond to it then.
- Consider turning off the phone entirely while driving. You might be surprised at what a relief it is to get off of the texting treadmill. [CIP](#)

**Charlie Halfen** is a retired UPS Fleet Safety Manager and President of CNH Safety.