Cell Phone Distractions Blocked

Since the laws can’t stop people from using their cell phones while driving, new cell phone applications will.

Tag Words: Texting, Distacted Driving, Parental control, Cell PhonesApplications, iZup, Mobile Safer, Voice Mate, Teen Safer, Cell Safety, Textcution, TextZapper, Drivesafe.ly, tXtBlocker

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Summary (MG)

Laws regarding hand-held cell phone usage and text messaging have been enacted in many states. These laws have not had much of an impact since the in decreasing the number of accidents resulting from distracted driving, according to numerous studies. The main way to fight this epidemic is to educate the public of the various dangers and ways to prevent these dangers. Many cell phone carrier service companies have taken the initiative to come out with various applications to help decrease hand-held cell phone usage and texting while driving. These applications may or may not be compatible with all phones or all carriers. Parents need to be made aware of these applications, so they have the option to use it for their children. If the parents are aware of these options, they will become more popular and more applications will be available to the public. The easiest way to make parents aware of the various applications is to provide a chart listing all the applications and what they block and the main features.

Video Link

Cell Phone Distractions Blocked: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SD4dqp1but4
The Issue: Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is becoming a major issue in our country especially with all the new technology. Distracted driving is any activity that has the potential to distract the driver from the primary task of driving (“Driving”). Distracted driving could be split into three categories of visual, manual, and cognitive (“Driving”). Secretary Ray LaHood calls distracted driving “unsafe, irresponsible, and devastating” behavior(Hanes). He even says distracted driving “is an epidemic. It’s an epidemic because everyone has a cellphone – and everyone thinks they can use it while driving. They can’t,“(Hanes). Text messaging while driving is the most serious form of distracted driving because it incorporates all three categories (“Driving”). People are constantly on the phone while driving, either sending text messages or making phone calls. It has been shown that drivers using hand-held devices are four times as likely to car accidents serious enough to cause injuries (“Driving”). Hence people pay more attention to their devices rather than where they are going on the road, leading to car accidents. It has been proven through many studies that the laws are not reducing the number of accidents on a national level, so a different approach must be taken to reduce the number of accidents.

Educating the public about the potential dangers and consequences of distracted driving is a must. However, simply educating the younger generation about the dangers and consequences is not enough to stop them. The parents must become aware of the possible dangers while on the road and they must find a way to protect their children from these dangers. The parents are the generation that must be educated in the potential dangers of using the phone while driving. No parent would want to know that their child got hurt due to something that was preventable. All drivers need to be aware of the potential dangers that are out there and how they can be prevented.

Many states have attempted to control this epidemic by proposing laws banning the use of cell phones. This has even reached the national legislation, with some people in power trying to initiate country-wide bans on cell phone usage while driving. Although the laws have been shown to not decrease the number of accidents, it has made people more aware of the issue. Even prominent people like Oprah Winfrey, have shed light on this serious issue. Even cell phone carrier companies have attempted to help in this matter by making available applications that can make driving safer by blocking cell phone functions.

Many different institutions have completed studies. Certain studies focus on the efficiency and enforcement of the laws, while other studies focus on certain types of distracted driving. It is hard for the studies to be accurate because not everyone tells the truth, people can easily just drop their phone or end a call when they see the police close by. Also it is difficult to isolate different sources of distracted driving. But from the various studies, it has been concluded that the laws are not decreasing the number of the accidents due to distracted driving.

As distracted driving has become a new epidemic, many states are taking an initiative to attempt to control it. One of the deadliest distractions while driving is texting. Many states have enacted laws to prohibit texting while driving. In most of these states, the ban has primary enforcement, which is when a person can be pulled over for specifically texting without committing any other violation. These states include Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware,
D.C., Georgia, Guam, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. However, in some of the states that have enacted the law, the ban has secondary enforcement, which is when a person is pulled over for another violation (besides cell phone usage while driving) but also gets in trouble for texting while driving. These states include Iowa, Nebraska, New York, and Virginia. While many states have enacted laws, some have not. These states include Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virgin Islands, and West Virginia.

Another distraction, which isn’t taken as seriously, is hand-held cell phone usage. This ban is enacted in only a few states. These states (with primary enforcement) include California, Connecticut, Delaware, D.C., New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Virgin Islands, and Washington. In Maryland, the ban is enforced secondarily. In Arkansas, there is a ban on hand-held cell phone usage between the ages of 18-20 year old drivers. In Louisiana and Oklahoma, learner or intermediate license drivers can’t use their cell phones while driving. New Mexico, people driving in state vehicles can’t use their cell phones while driving (“State”). (ManpreetGhuman)

Accidents happen everywhere in the world. Among all the accidents that happen in our everyday lives, car accidents cause the most deaths nationally. In 2008, there were over 5.8 million car crashes, 1,630,000 causing injury, and 34,017 ending in death. Distractions such as cell phone usage cause most of the car accidents. For example, talking on a cell phone causes nearly 25% of car accidents. Adding on to that, cell phone distraction causes 6,000 deaths and nearly half a million injuries in United States every year according to the Human Factors and Ergonomics society. Moreover, at any given time during daylight hours in 2008, more than 800,000 vehicles were driven by someone using a hand-held cell phone. Finally, 4 out of 5 accidents are caused by cell phone usage distraction while driving. (Drunk driving is roughly 1/3, still less than this amount). According to a study done, drivers talking on a phone are about 18% slower to brake, and this causes many of the accidents that occur (“Car”, “State”, “When”). (Da In Lee)

In 2008, distracted driving led to 5,870 fatalities. In 2004, 8% of drivers that were in a fatal crash were said to be distracted while driving. This number increased to 11% in 2008. Drivers under the age of 20 are the group with the highest number of fatal crashes due to distracted driving. A recent study reports that between 2002 and 2007, 16,000 road fatalities were caused by drivers text messaging (Hanes). Cell phone usage delays a driver’s reactions to that of when a person is intoxicated with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.8 percent (“Driving”).

A study has shown that in three states and Washington, DC, laws banning the use of cell phones are not reducing accidents. According to the study, Washington DC, which has a ban, had accidents just as frequently as Virginia and Maryland, two states without cell phone bans. It is known that cell phone bans reduce cell phone use while driving, and it is also known that using a phone while driving increases the risk of an accident (“Study”). So if cell phone use is dropping, why aren’t accident rates?
Researchers have been puzzled. One suggestion as to how this trend formed is that drivers in states with a cell phone ban in place are turning to hands free devices. These devices have proved to be no better than hand held devices. If the risk of an accident is the same between a hand-held and a hands-free device, and drivers are switching to hands-free devices due to cell phone bands, then accident rates are not going to drop (“Study”).

This is another article about the same study. It adds some additional insight, suggesting that drivers have many other distractions to deal with while driving and technology to alert the driver when he or she is being distracted could be helpful. Also, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shared its feelings toward the study:

"It is irresponsible to suggest that laws banning cell phone use while driving have zero effect on the number of crashes on our nation's roadways," the agency said in a statement. "A University of Utah study shows that using a cell phone while driving can be just as dangerous and deadly as driving drunk. We know that by enacting and enforcing tough laws, states have reduced the number of crashes leading to injuries and fatalities. We know that high-visibility campaigns and enforcement, like Click It or Ticket and Drunk Driving. Over The Limit. Under Arrest has had a positive influence on driver behavior (Naylor).

This study aimed at determining if a cell phone ban caused a short term decline in cell phone use while driving, or if it was sustained for at least a year. Two samples were analyzed. The sample from Connecticut showed no significant decline in use rates. The sample from New York showed decline of about 1%. Cell phone citation issued during the first 15 months only accounted for 2% of all traffic citations (McCartt).

Overall it seems as if cell phone bans are not working. Data seems to be all over the place most likely because this is a hard issue to study. As the articles state, even if the laws are working, every one is using blue tooth and similar technology and that is supposed to be just as bad. Cops are having a hard time enforcing the law because all you have to do is drop your phone when you see one and if your texting your phone is usually out of sight anyway.(Jeffery Sanza)

What many victims of texting while driving are not aware of, are the severe consequences that come with it. Many are under the influence that they need to be committing another offense to be penalized for texting while driving, or that they will be administered a small fine and be done with it. Numerous states have recognized the severity of this habit though, and have set some strict consequences for it.

As of 2010, there are 25 states that have laws against texting while driving. Among these laws come repercussions which vary between the states. Majority of them issue a fine for this offense, each fine being dependent on the state in which the offense was committed. Some states issue the same flat rate fine each time a driver is caught texting while driving. States that follow this form of punishment include Arkansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Fines among these states vary from $25 in Wyoming, Virginia, and South Carolina, to $750 in Utah. Texas also administers fines which are city dependent (Gillingwater).
Other states issue fines that are dependent on the number of offenses committed. These states include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Nebraska, and Rhode Island. In these states, one fine is issued for the first offense, a higher fine for the second offense, and an even higher fine for all other subsequent offenses. These fines range from as low as $20 for the first offense, $50 for the second, and greater than $100 for subsequent offenses. Depending on the state, fines can be even higher (Gillingwater).

Some states have consequences that are a lot stricter. In numerous states, the violation has been compared to drinking while driving, and to fit the trend, has been given the abbreviation of “DWT” for “Driving While Texting”. Illinois is one of the most expensive states to text and drive in. In Illinois, victims of texting and driving can face charges of up to $1,000 per offense, up to two offenses. Violators who commit a third texting while driving offense though, are faced with a loss or suspension of license. Iowa also has stricter rules regarding the violation. In Iowa, a $30 fine is administered for the offense alone, and is upped to $500 if the offense results in an accident. Other states also take part in this same kind of punishment, where under the circumstance that a violator kills or injures another motorist, penalties are added to the existing laws (Gillingwater).

One state has taken repercussions even further. Among all of the states that abide by texting while driving laws, Utah is the state with the strictest. In Utah, violators not only risk the chance of being slapped with a $750 fine, but also risk the chance of facing time in prison. Utah treats texting while driving in the same manner as it does for drinking while driving. Just as for being pulled over for drinking while driving, being pulled over for texting while driving can result in up to 15 years in prison. Utah is not the only state that has taken repercussions this far though. In one incident in California, one man, whose texting and driving actions resulted in the death of a pedestrian, faced 4 years in prison (Gillingwater).

Though numerous states have been successful in creating repercussions for violators of texting and driving, such as charges and fines, or even some severe as time in jail, tougher and stricter enforcement would be more effective in keeping our roads safer. If individuals who engage in texting while driving were more aware of the consequences, and more frequently punished for the offense, our roads might one day be a significantly safer place than they are today.

When it comes to driving, cell phones can be a major distraction. What many drivers and parents are unaware of though, are the variety of applications and devices available to make cell phones hands free, and even completely inaccessible while driving!

Most people are aware of the most common device, Bluetooth, which makes incoming and outgoing calls a hands-free function. The most basic form of this hands-free device is the Bluetooth Headset. This device is wirelessly connected directly to your cell phone allowing incoming calls to be answered with the press of a button and conversations to take place with both hands still on the wheel. Advancing from this device are vehicles that are Bluetooth enabled. These vehicles are equipped with Bluetooth communication systems that sync your cell phone to your car. With this system, conversations basically occur through your car’s stereo system speakers. Incoming calls can be answered, outgoing calls can be made, and conversations can occur all from the sound of your voice. For cars that do not come equipped with this system,
aftermarket kits can be purchased and installed in a driver’s current car. When it comes to cell phone calls alone, many are informed of the different options that are available to make this a hands-free function. (www.bluetomorrow.com).

A more common distraction among younger drivers now is texting and driving. When it comes to texting, many are not aware of the applications available to prevent it. Although it seems as if there is little to do to put a stop to texting and driving, there are actually numerous applications that do just that! One application which might not be the most effective, but is still preventative, is called “iZup”. The “iZup” application has a time delay feature which only allows your phone to be used when the vehicle is not in motion, accounting for stoplights, and heavy traffic. “iZup” is one of the cheaper applications, costing $5 per month. Another application which attempts to diminish texting and driving is “Textecution”. This app costs a flat rate of $29.99 and features a system that allows texting to occur if a person is a passenger in a car, but not a driver. This is done by containing a feature which blocks all texting. Texting features can only be unlocked via the parent who registered the device. A similar app is “tXtBlocker”. This app, running at a $25 fee plus $10 per month, is a computer application that prevents calling, texting, e-mailing and web-surfing when the phone is in motion. It also allows for parents to set “safe-zones” to disable or limit functions. For example, with the app parents are able to set a certain speed limit that when reached, all phone features will be blocked. Parents are also able to pinpoint their child’s location on an online map. The only way for the phone’s features to be unlocked, other than by permission of the parent, is by solving a timed puzzle which will only temporarily unlock the phone” (Rothman, 1). ““Drivesafe.Ly” is an application that is a little different from the others. Unlike the other apps, “Drivesafe.Ly” does not detect whether or not the phone is in motion. Instead, the owner has to turn this app on when they get in the car. When it is on, incoming text messages will be read aloud to the driver and he or she is able to respond via voice as well. All of the available services always allow drivers to dial 911 and also let you set up certain numbers in advance which can be contacted even when all other features are blocked (ex: parent’s numbers)” (Svenson 1). Although these applications are not perfect and are not available for all cell phone models, they are a step in the right direction to making the road a safer place. (Ashley Angelo)

tXtBlocker is an application for a cell phone which can limit or disable various cell phone functions. tXtBlocker is a computer software which is downloaded and activated to one’s phone via an activation code. All wireless carriers provide this application but it is only compatible with certain phones. It is compatible with BlackBerrys (ex: Bold, Curve, Pearl, Storm, 8830, 8800, 8820, etc.), HTC Aria, HTC myTouch Slide, HTC EVO, Droid Incredible, Droid 2, Droid X, Motorola i1, Samsung Captivate, Sanyo Zio, Samsung Intercept, Samsung Epic, and Samsung Vibrant. Slowly the application is being made more compatible with other phones based on consumer demands such as Iphone4, PalmPre, and Windows Mobile 7 (tXtBlocker).

The tXtBlocker application can be controlled by an account online. This account allows the owner to control when, where and how the cell phone can be used. The owner of the phone is the only one that can initiate the services provided by the application. “No-Cell Zones” can be set up to limit or disable cell phone functions in certain areas. The account can also track the phone’s location and monitor the driving speed. The application also allows the owner to use a Bluetooth set while driving and being able to use the phone as a passenger if agreed to via the
online account. The application allows the phone to make 911 calls and calls to preset numbers of on a safe list (TXtBlocker).

While tXtBlocker is active, only the calls and text messages from the numbers on the ‘Safe List’ are allowed to go through to the phone. When tXtBlocker is active and the numbers are not on the ‘Safe List’ the text messages, e-mails, and calls are kept in the phone’s database. When a text message is sent, an automatic text while be sent to the sender letting them know that tXtBlocker is active. Calls are sent to voicemail and a text message is sent to the caller to let them know that tXtBlocker is active. It is also recommended to update the voicemail to let people know that tXtBlocker may be active (TXtBlocker).

For tXtBlocker there is a one-time installation and set up fee of $24.99 which includes the first month’s service fee as well. After the initial installation fee there is a $9.99 monthly service fee. There’s a family plan that is available for one low activation fee and one low price. This plan allows the entire family to get this service. Also available is a pre-paid plan for a year, which has no activation fee and members receive 2 months free. With this plan, members can save $45 with an annual cost of $99.99. There is also a plan available for Enterprise clients (business and government). This plan is given as a customized proposal for which the clients must email sales@txtblocker.com to receive (TXtBlocker).

tXtBlocker could definitely help the parents be able to protect their children better. The parents have an online account that can control the phone functions and make sure that the children are driving safely. They could do this by monitoring their speed and their location. They can also make sure that their children are not distracted by text messages or phone calls during driving. The parents can monitor their children without having to constantly be around them, which makes it easier because children are not always with their parents. (ManpreetGhuman)

Among the numerous applications available to block texting while driving is Drivesafe.ly. With this application, receiving and replying to text messages becomes completely hands free. Once the application is turned on, incoming text messages are read aloud to the recipient. In response to every received text, an automatic message is sent. Although it is not available for all phones, the application can be purchased on all Android and Blackberry phones available for Verizon Wireless and AT&T customers. Activation requires a data plan, along with a text messaging (or SMS) plan. It can be downloaded and installed on your phone through the Drivesafe.ly website online, or through your phone’s mobile browsers. Although it is not available for all smartphones and cell phone companies yet, it will soon be available to iPhone, Windows Mobile, Symbian, Palm Pre, and Sprint customers (Free).

For those capable of downloading the app, is the option of two versions; one being free, and the other with a small charge. In the free version, up to 25 words per text message are read aloud. The premium version, Drivesafe.ly 2.0, comes with a small fee of $4 per month. This version not only reads up to 500 words per text message, but can also read and automatically respond to emails (Lewis).

Both versions though, free and premium, come with a variety of benefits and features. For starters, unlike most voice readings on cell phones, this one is equipped with a ‘human-like’
voice, rather than a ‘robotic’ one. Users have the option of a male or female voice, and can change the tone depending on the gender of the individual sending the text. The app is also capable of picking up 98% of words, and understands commonly used, ‘text-friendly’ acronyms such as “lol” and “brb” (Lewis).

Customization is one of the favored features of this app. Users can create and customize their own automatic responses to alert senders that they are driving and will get back to them later, or can turn that feature off and just simply have their texts read aloud to them. Users also have the option of having texts and emails read through their cell phone speakers, or syncing their device to their car radio or Bluetooth device (if applicable) and having the voice come in through there. The application is quick and easy to activate, requiring just the touch of a button, and does not slow down your phone or drain its battery (Lewis).

Although the app comes with a lot of great features and benefits, it also has its downfalls. One con of the application is that it does not specifically apply to drivers being on the road, and can be turned on and off at any given time. So although it is a great way for drivers to keep both hands on the wheel, and both eyes on the road, they can opt to turn it off at their own convenience. Another negative is that it is only available for smartphones, which not all cell phone users have, limiting who the app can be purchased for (Lewis).

Despite these downfalls though, the Drivesafe.ly application has been proven to be effective when used properly, and is one of the favorites among fellow users of text blocking applications. If it were more easily available for a broader variety of phones, and included further features such as staying activated while in motion, the application could be very successful in making the roads a safer place (Ashley Angelo).

iZup is a phone application developed by Illume Software to prevent one’s cell phone from creating a distraction while driving. It accomplishes this by blocking text messages, emails, phone calls, web browsing, and the use of all other applications. The iZup app will not interfere with calls to 911 in the event of an emergency and after 911 has been dialed; the app allows all incoming and outgoing calls. The application also allows the use of one authorized application such as a navigation app, three phone numbers authorized by the account holder, and a password-protected passenger override. iZup is currently available for Blackberry and Android phones but will be compatible with all AT&T, Verizon, Windows Mobile, and Sprint phones. The application will be available for a single user price of $2.95/month or $19.95/yr. The company also offers a family plan allowing 3-5 phones on a single account for $5.95/month or $59.95/yr (“IZUP”). (Jeffery Sanza)

Zoomsafer is a company that provides many users with its incredible mobile service to protect or prevent people from accidents caused by distracted driving. It offers various products. Firstly, there is the MobileSafer. This specific application is directly installed and downloaded onto the cell phones with a charge of $25 a year or $2.99 a month (“FleetSafer”). It requires simple procedure of downloading the application and installing it onto the device and even allows the users to configure the preferences on the application. This application is automatically activated when the driver turns on the ignition of the car. It suppresses text/email alerts and sends custom auto-replies to those who have tried to make communication by phone to the
These replies indicate that the owner of the phone is currently driving, and will get back to the call/email/texts when he/she reaches the destination. This specific application can be further upgraded with the addition of another application called VoiceMate. Although there is an upgraded charge of $40 a year or $3.99 a month, it sure is worth it. It is very easy to upgrade with just a push of a button. When upgraded with VoiceMate, the users are now announced with incoming texts and e-mail messages through the Bluetooth. This specific application is voice active, meaning that it allows the users to control when the messages are played and responded to. Furthermore, it uses simple voice commands such as “Listen to Text”, “Listen to e-mail” and “reply” to freely control incoming and outgoing messages of the mobile device while driving. Lastly, Zoomsafer also offers different products to teenaged drivers. An application called TeenSafer automatically launches “safe drive mode” when the phone pairs with any in-vehicle Bluetooth connection. It not only eliminates temptation to text or email while driving, but also restricts all inbound and outbound calls to three priority calls. Just like MobileSafe, it automatically replies to inbound texts, emails and calls with personalized message made by the user. Finally it also notifies parents once the software is installed and each time the teen starts and stops driving. This application costs $25 a year or $2.99 a month.

CellSafety is another application out there today that serves or tries to cease teen car accidents caused by distracted driving. This application is only restricted to and is available for BlackBerries, Android, and Nokia S60 Phones. Here are its features. CellSafety has the world’s largest database, which allows them to use more than 4,000 words and phrases to indicate that the user is in harm’s way. The parents of the users are instantly notified by emails and text messages whenever there are concerns. Message Monitoring is also available in CellSafety. Parents of the users are notified when there is a dangerous incoming messages including sexting, pedophiles, cyber-bullying, suicide or gun talk. Furthermore, its GPS tracking system allows the parents to know where their child is 24/7 from anywhere in the world. There also is a virtual fence, which the setup of it allows the parents to be notified when he or she enters or leaves the parameters of the fence set by the parents. With the application installed, there is, of course no texting while driving. A cool side-kick to this feature is that the passengers can also ask parents for permission for them to text. The parents can also install No Texting Zones, which if the device is in certain areas, all incoming text messages will be blocked. There also is a speed alert system, with which if the application user goes over certain speed limit, parents will be notified instantly. However, there are always ways the teenagers can call the parents or 911 when in emergency. Although it may seem like it does numerous things, it only costs $9.99 a month per mobile device installed with this application.

Textecution is rather a simpler application that does one thing: it prohibits the user from texting when needed. Since texting while driving is 40% more dangerous than drunk driving, its main purpose is to get rid of drivers’ texting while driving. Once the Textecution application is installed, the user is limited to text. For example, once Textecution recognizes that the phone is traveling faster than 10mph in the car, it disables the phone’s texting feature so text messages cannot be sent or received. However, once the phone is at rest or is traveling at a speed slower than 10mph, the texting feature becomes available for use, and allows the user to use it to
its full capability (*Stop*). This specific application is suitable for various phones unlike other applications with restrictions and it consists of one-time payment of $29.99. This product not only limits texting but also prohibits users from accessing e-mails or other forms of things that make the user focus on phone rather than on the road while driving (*Stop*).

TextZapper is another application that allows parental controls over their kids. Since texting while driving is the #1 cause of teen deaths in the United States, this specific application attempts to reduce the number by prohibiting teenagers from texting, emailing, or surfing the internet while driving. It goes by Total Parental Control, where the software itself is controlled by a parent and the users of the mobile device may not choose to uninstall the application without any parents’ consent (Stein). It is automatically updated when the mobile user is in driving mode, and blocks the mobile device from accepting any sort of e-mails, text messages, or even internet surfing until the vehicle has stopped (Stein). The parents are instantly notified by text or e-mails when there are concerns, and of course the mobile users are able to contact the parents, emergency contacts or 911 when there is a problem or an emergency. There is no installation or activation fee for this application and the payment consists of monthly charge of $4.99 (Stein). (Da In Lee)

Although there have been many applications invented with intentions of diminishing texting and other phone distractions while driving, others have taken alternate measures to get the message across. One activity to promote the awareness of distracted driving took place at Grant High School in Dry Prong, Louisiana. At this high school, students, both current drivers and those getting ready to take the license test, took place in a distracted driving simulation. During this simulation, students were able to achieve an “almost-real” experience on the consequences acquired with distracted driving. The simulation gave students a gist of the reality of their reaction time while texting and driving, and other driving distractions (Vailes).

Jan Griffith, an employee of Unite International which is the company who provided the high school with the simulation equipment stated, “We want to make people aware of the dangers of drunk driving and the dangers of texting while driving, so that they can make smart decisions regarding their driving habits”. Employees of Unite International, as well as teachers and faculty of the high school, hoped to effectively deliver the important message of how dangerous distracted driving can be to all of their students and believed that showing them, rather than just telling them, would be the best way to go about it (Vailes).

Students who participated in the activity were positively affected by it, and believed it to be a very good learning experience. Some students were able to see first hand just how distracted their phones can make them, and reported experiencing troubles with controlling the car as well as delayed reaction times. Many students reported that the experience taught them a lot, and made a big impact on the decisions they will make when it is their turn to be behind the wheel (Vailes).

Another step taken to promote awareness was done by Oprah Winfrey. In her efforts to make the issue aware to the public, Oprah administered a ‘No Phone Zone’ pledge, and a national ‘No Phone Zone Day’. In her ‘No Texting Campaign’, Oprah encouraged drivers to put a stop to cell phone usage while on the road. In this petition, she offered three options. The first option to sign
for was not texting and driving; second, no texting while driving and only using hands-free devices when necessary; and third, no texting or calling while driving and pulling over if need be (Singh).

Though it seems like a very small deed, many people became involved in her petition. Not only did your everyday residents take part in it, but many celebrities including Sandra Bullock and Jeff Bridges also signed. Along with celebrities, business magnates and government officials participated in the signing of the petition. Soon after the petition was administered and announced to the public, 236,447 people had signed online at oprah.com (Singh).

Along with the petition, Oprah also hosted the first national ‘No Phone Zone Day’ which took place on April 30, 2010. On this day, Oprah dedicated her entire show to promoting awareness of distracted driving and putting a stop to texting while driving. Throughout the day, Oprah also had employees and other supporters campaign the cause in US cities including Washington and Los Angeles (Singh).

Cell phone companies have also begun to show their support for bans against texting while driving. Verizon Wireless along with Sprint Nextel have announced their support for the legislation ban on texting and emailing while behind the wheel. On a more specific note, Verizon Wireless has shown their support for the House of Representative’s ALERT Driver’s Act. The goal of this act is to reduce the amount of Federal highway funding available to states that do not have a law prohibiting texting while driving enacted (Marek).

The senior vice president of government affairs at Sprint, Vonya McCann, in efforts to show the companies support for the ban stated, “Sprint supports state legislation which bans texting while driving and we support federal legislation which does the same. Distracted driving is dangerous and as research shows, texting while driving is extremely dangerous. We look forward to working with legislators interested in taking this step” (Marek). Verizon Wireless and Sprint Nextel are not the only cell phone companies involved in showing their support for the issue though. Cellular South, which is a Tier 2 company in Mississippi, has also made efforts to show their support for a bill which prohibits 15 and 16 year olds who are either current licensed drivers or soon-to-be drivers, from texting while driving (Marek).

AT&T, another cell phone company, has taken a different approach in showing their support. In their efforts, AT&T has put funding toward educating consumers about the dangers associated with texting while driving. In doing so, they have made revisions in how their employees promote prohibiting the task of texting and driving, have increased the amount of warnings placed on handsets about the dangers of distracted driving, and have produced a series of public service announcements discouraging the activity (Marek).

Cell phone companies have made a point in showing their alertness of the dangers associated with their products when it comes to being behind the wheel and are continuous in making efforts to promote awareness to their customers and other cell phone users. (Ashley Angelo)

While cell phones were initially introduced for their potential to help our society come up with the fast life, it has also brought unseen consequences. We are constantly facing dangers while on the road. Even innocent people are in harm’s way because someone else may chose to use their
cell phone while driving. Cell phones have started a whole new epidemic that must be controlled soon, before too many innocent lives are lost.

**The Service Project: Targeting Parents**

Since cell phone distractions are such a major issue the main group we are trying to target with our information to is the parents. In the past contacting the cell phone carriers has not resulted in any action. In order to get the message across to the parents, we have researched different applications available for blocking texting and various functions while driving. Most of the applications are geared toward texting since that is a major epidemic now. We have written a letter to various magazines that target parents. We have compiled all the data on the different applications into a readable chart which will make picking applications easier for parents. We have sent the letter and the chart to various parent magazines like Parenting, and InteractiveDad.com.

**Letter**

To Whom This May Concern:

We are Rutgers University students. We are aware that being distracted by your phone while driving is a major cause of accidents amongst teens. According to the Human Factors and Ergonomics society, 25% of car accidents are caused by cell phones and cell phone distractions cause 6,000 deaths. To resolve this issue we have researched different applications available to block certain functions of the cell phones while driving. This information can help parents become aware that there is a way to protect their children while they are on the road. Most of the applications are geared toward blocking texting because that is a major issue today. Drivesafe.ly and VoiceMate are two applications that allow drivers to listen to their text messages or emails while driving rather than having to read them.

We hope that you can incorporate this information into your magazine to allow parents to be aware of this information to make better decisions for their children.

Thank You,

Ashley Angelo
ManpreetGhuman
Da In Lee
Jeffery Sanza
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application</th>
<th>iZup</th>
<th>MobileSafer</th>
<th>VoiceMate</th>
<th>Teen Safer</th>
<th>CellSafety</th>
<th>Textcution</th>
<th>TextZapper</th>
<th>Drivesafe.ly</th>
<th>tXtBlocker</th>
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<td>Text Messages</td>
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<td>Other Application use</td>
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**Pricing**

- **iZup**:
  - Single user $2.99/month or $25/year
  - Family plan $5.95/month or $99.95/year
  - Allows 3-5 phones on a single account

- **MobileSafer**:
  - $2.99/month or $25/year

- **VoiceMate**:
  - $3.99/month or $40/year

- **Teen Safer**:
  - $2.99/month or $25/year

- **CellSafety**:
  - $9.99/month

- **Textcution**:
  - One-time payment of $29.99

- **TextZapper**:
  - $4.99/month

- **Drivesafe.ly**:
  - Free or $4/month

- **tXtBlocker**:
  - $9.99/month (one-time installation fee of $24.99 includes the first month’s service fee)
  - Pre-paid plan $99.99/year
  - No activation fee
  - Members receive 2 months free

**Compatibility**

- **iZup**:
  - Blackberry
  - Android
  - New 1.1 version will be available on Android, AT&T Media Mall, App World, Verizon V CAST, App Store for Windows Mobile and Sprint's Digital Lounge

- **MobileSafer**:
  - Blackberry SMART PHONES, Android

- **VoiceMate**:
  - Blackberry SMART PHONES, Android

- **Teen Safer**:
  - Blackberry SMART PHONES, Android

- **CellSafety**:
  - AT&T – Blackberry, Nexus One, Nokia
  - VZW – Ally, Blackberry, Droid, HTC
  - Sprint – Blackberry, Evo, Hero
  - T-Mobile – Beholds 2, Blackberry, Motorola, Vibrant

- **Textcution**:
  - ATT - Dell Aero, Dell Phone mini, Dell Smoke, HTC, Motorola
  - BackFlip, Nexus One
  - VZW – LG Ally, Motorola, Droid, Devour, HTC
  - Eris
  - T-Mobile – Motorola CLIQ, MyTouch, Pulse, G2, Behold II, vibrant, Nexus One

- **TextZapper**:
  - Over 70 Smart Phones

- **Drivesafe.ly**:
  - Android Blackberry (for AT&T and Verizon wireless)
  - Soon be available
  - Iphone, Windows Mobile, Symbian, Palm Pre, Sprint customers

- **tXtBlocker**:
  - BlackBerry (Bold, Curve, Pearl, Storm, 8830, 8800, 8820, etc.), HTC
  - Aria, myTouch slide, EVO
  - Droid (Incredible, Droid 2, Droid X)
  - Motorola i1, Samsung (Captivate, Epic, Vibrant)
  - Sanyo Zio, Sanyo A1101
  - Soon be available
  - Iphone4, PalmPre, Windows Mobile
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>iZup</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Password-protected passenger override</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Three authorized phone numbers allowed (incase mom or work calls)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- One authorized app allowed (like a GPS navigator app)</td>
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<td>- Emergency 911 quick dial always available</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Emergency app disable after 911 is called the app allows all incoming/outgoing calls</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile Safer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Users configure the preferences on the device</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Automatically activated when the driver turns on the ignition of the car</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sends custom auto-replies to those who have tried to make communication by phone to the user</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Voice Mate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Voice active, meaning that it allows the users to control when messages are played and responded to</td>
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<tr>
<td>- It uses simple voice commands such as “Listen to Text”, “Listen to e-mail” and “reply” to freely control incoming and outgoing messages of the mobile device while driving</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teen Safer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Automatically launches “safe drive mode” when phone pairs with any in-vehicle Bluetooth connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Automatically replies to in-bound texts, emails and calls with personalized message made by the user</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Notifies parents once the software is installed and each time the teen starts and stops</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cell Safety</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parents of the users are instantly notified by email and text messages whenever there are concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>- GPS tracking system allows the parents to know where their child is 24/7 from anywhere in the world</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Virtual fence, which the setup of it allows the parents to be notified when he or she enters or leaves the parameters of the fence</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parents can also install No Texting Zones</td>
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<td>- Speed alert system, with which if the device user goes over certain speed limit, parents will be notified instantly</td>
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<td>- Can call the parents or 911 when in emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Textuition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- If phone is traveling faster than 10mph (in the car), it disables the phone’s texting feature so text messages cannot be sent or received</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TextZapper</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parental Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Automatically updated when the mobile user is in driving mode, and blocks it from accepting any sort of e-mails, text messages, or Internet surfing until the vehicle has stopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents are instantly notified by text or e-mails when there is concern</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mobile users are able to contact the parents, emergency contacts or 911 when there is a problem or an emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Drivesafe.ly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incoming text messages are read aloud to the recipient</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Automatic message sent to every received text</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Free version, up to 25 words per text message are read aloud</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Premium version, reads up to 500 words per text message, but can also read and automatically respond to emails</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Option of a male or female voice, and can change the tone depending on the gender of the individual sending the text</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Capable of picking up 98% of words; understands commonly used, ‘text-friendly’ acronyms</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Create and customize own automatic responses to alert senders that they are driving and will get back to them later, or can turn that feature off and just simply have their texts read aloud to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Option of having texts and emails read through their cell phone speakers, or syncing their device to their car radio or Bluetooth device</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>tXtBlocker</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Controlled by an account online</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Control when, where and how the cell phone can be used</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Owner of the phone is the only one that can initiate the services provided by the application</td>
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<tr>
<td>- “No-Cell Zones” can be set up to limit or disable cell phone functions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Track the phone’s location and monitor the driving speed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Application also allows the owner to use a Bluetooth set while driving and being able to use the phone as a passenger if agreed to</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Make 911 calls and calls to preset numbers of on a ‘Safe List’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Automatic text message sent in response to text or phone call made to user</td>
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</table>
References


Editorials

Ashley Angelo

Dear Editor,

Texting and driving has become a major cause of concern on the road. It seems almost impossible for teens and young adults to put down the phone while they’re behind the wheel, causing driver inattention to be the number one cause of accidents. As a member of a concerned group at Rutger’s University, I wish to fight this on-going battle of texting and driving, and inform the public of the many precautions available to prevent this so-called “necessity”.

Teens and young adults have become fascinated and overtaken by texting. They do it any chance they can get – regardless of the dangers it can cause – even when on the road! Many parents have tried to prevent texting while driving, but has simply telling your children what to do ever been 100% effective? Unfortunately, probably not. Actions speak louder than words and there are finally actions available to take!

There are numerous applications available for purchase to block individuals from texting, making calls, and using the internet while on the road. Applications such as tXtBlocker and
iZUP act as parental control softwares, and can almost completely disable your phone while on
the road, leaving only emergency calls (such as 9-1-1) a possibility.

The public needs to become more aware in order to make the road a safer place. The
more we know, the bigger steps we can take. Is a simple text really worth the life of another, or
even your very own life? Get informed and spread the word. Stop texting and driving before it
stops you!

____________________________________________________________________________
ManpreetGhuman

Cell phones are a major part of our daily routine. With the smartphones today, people
can go on the internet, send emails, text, make calls while walking around, driving, running, etc.
While cell phone usage has increased, so have the number of accidents due to distracted driving.
Distracted driving was once trying to eat your breakfast and drink your coffee, or check your
makeup before getting to work, now its texting while driving. Many of us do this without ever
getting into an accident, but some end up getting into accidents. We all think we’re capable of
texting and driving but how many times have we had close calls and stopped just in time to avoid
an accident?

Oprah did a show on this new deadly “epidemic”, a young man from Utah ended up
causing an accident in which 2 men died because he was texting. Like many of us, he thought he
was capable of texting while driving too, until tragedy struck. We don’t realize how deadly our
actions can be. We share our roads with millions of people with families. When we text and
drive, we don’t just put our lives at risk, we also put the people sharing the roads with us at risk.

In the second you read your eyes off the road, someone may have stopped but you don’t
realize it. Truthfully, we all have seen some gruesome videos with people getting hurt because
of texting and driving, these may have an impact for a couple of minutes, hours, days. We may
even refrain from texting and driving, but that doesn’t last for long. Nothing would really stop
us, unless something close to us happened because that’s when you know something can happen.
Before that we constantly think, “Oh that can’t happen to me,” until you realize it can happen to
anyone. You may get pulled over for using your cell phone and you may get a ticket, but even
that won’t stop you. Truthfully nothing can really stop you. But just think is a text really worth
your life? Is it worth the grief it could cause others?

____________________________________________________________________________
Da In Lee

Distracted driving and its preventative applications

A car, if used with much care, is a great innovated invention that almost everyone uses
to travel today. However, when it is used without any caution, it can be the deadliest weapon of
all. As you may all know, car accidents happen. Whether or not you are the cause, they happen,
and when they do effects are excruciating. Many people know from reading the newspapers
every day or just by turning on a local news channel, people actually suffer unbearable pain if
not die from these accidents that we cannot avoid. Cell phone usage while driving has shown
results that are far more explicit than any other cause of car accidents. There are many who
enforce the law and do not use it while they drive. However, there are others who tend to ignore
such facts along with the chance of danger that they might cause not only to themselves, but to others.

With today’s technology, there are many ways to alleviate this problem. Firstly, when cell phone usage problem started to rise, Bluetooth came out. This device, with its wireless technology that connects the phone to a small ear piece, has been the first stepping stone into other innovative and creative applications that are out there today. One of the most common and cheap application, called “iZup” features its time delay method that only allows the phone to be used when the vehicle is not in motion, for example, at a red light. This application costs only $5 a month. Another amazing app is called the “Textecution” which is a bit expensive, but it features an insane system that only allows texting if a cell phone user is only in the passenger seat of the vehicle. This app blocks all incoming texts and the app can only be unlocked by a parent who has previously registered the software. This app consists of one-time payment of $29.99. A similar app is called the “tXtBlocker”. This app costs $25 plus $10 per month, but it proves its worthiness with its cool technology that prevents all calling, texting, e-mailing and basically all the things that a driver can do to be distracted while driving, when the car is in motion. This app also comes with parental controls that allow the users to set the “safe-zones” to disable or limit functions. For example, parents are able to set a speed limit that if reached, all cell phone features will be blocked. Obviously, only the person that activates the app can unlock its features. There is also a free app available to the users as well. An app called “Drivesafe.Ly” can be turned on by the user when he or she gets into the car. When it is on, incoming texts are manually read out loud to the driver.

With the technology out there today, we can save lives, lives that can flourish if senseless things such as using cell phones while driving can be prevented. I am writing to you today so that you can make this information available to the people who are unaware. There is, of course an incentive for you guys too. If more people become interested in the previous apps that I’ve wrote about, you can earn yourself some advertisement money from the app producers who would want to precisely advertise their products through your company. These applications, along with currently enacted laws that prevent cell phone usage while driving, are keys to alleviate all the damages that can be caused with car accidents.

Jeffery Sanza
Distracted Driving

It seems like text messaging has taken over as the main form of communication for today’s youth. This form of communication has proven to be very convenient for those times when a phone conversation would be rude, offensive, or otherwise inappropriate. “Texting”, as it is loosely called, has also proved to be deadly. We thought that drivers using their cell phones was a problem, now we have drivers, teens especially, completely taking their eyes off the road while driving with their knees to send text messages.

As of July, 24 states had made texting while driving illegal. These texting bans may be a step in the right direction, but are they really helping the situation. Let’s think about this realistically. You’re driving and your using your cell phone. You see a cop, set the phone down until he passes, then pick it back up and go about your business. As for the cops, catching someone in the act of using a phone is less than simple to say the least. There needs to be some way to disable texting while driving.
A phone application called Text Zapper is doing just that. Parents can choose to disable their children’s phone’s texting capabilities whenever the phone is moving over 10mph. I believe that this can make a real dent in the number of accidents caused by teen’s texting while driving. This still leaves a problem: What about the parents that are engaging in this dangerous trend? I think applications like Text Zapper need to be mandatory on all cell phones for all ages. This way there is no choice given to the driver. If a text is that important, they will just have to pull over and take care of it.