

National Teens Don't Text and Drive Week.....by Lisa S. Garbaty

Director, Resolutions
lgarbaty@illinoispta.org

Get ready to promote National Teens Don't Text and Drive Week! **November 18th-24th**

In 2010, 416,000 people were injured and an additional 3,092 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver.¹ Sending or receiving a text while driving takes the driver's eyes off the road for an average of 4.5 seconds: at 55 mph, this is the equivalent of driving across a football field – blindfolded!² The crash risk for those texting while driving is 23 times greater than for those driving while not distracted.³

It isn't just taking your eyes off the road that causes the problem: taking your mind off the road is also an issue; using a cell phone while driving reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent.⁴ It is estimated that drivers using cell phones fail to see up to 50 percent of their driving environment.⁵ "Each day, more than 15 people are killed and more than 1,200 people are injured in crashes that were reported to involve a distracted driver."⁶

National Teens Don't Text & Drive Week:

- it isn't just about texting;
- it isn't for just a week; and
- it isn't just for teens.

Which age group has the greatest proportion of distracted drivers? The under age 20 group; in 2009, 16 percent of all drivers younger than 20 years old that were involved in fatal crashes were reported to have been distracted while driving.⁷

Is it just teens? Of course not. While the under 20 age group has the greatest proportion of distracted drivers overall, of those drivers involved in fatal crashes who were reportedly distracted, it was the 30-39 year olds who had the largest proportion of cell phone involvement.²

We have made a difference with our 2007 Resolution to Ban Cell Phone Use While Driving as we have indicated in our current Resolution report. In addition, this past spring, delegates at the National PTA Convention passed the Distracted Driving Resolution, showing support by PTA members all over the **country** for effecting change in this area.

But, as you can see from the statistics, there is still more to do. We, as parents and teachers, need to increase awareness of the dangers of distracted driving. You can do this by lending your support to National Teens Don't Text and Drive Week.



How?

- Talk to your children about good driving practices.
- Pass this article on to your family and your membership, along with prior PTA article, "Texting While Driving: Parents' Role in Prevention," by Randy Craig, at www.pta.org.
- Distribute handouts, hang posters in public areas, and post video clips to your website on the issue. You can find some at: <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-involved/downloads.html>, and at <http://www.illinoistollway.com/drive-now-text-later>.
- Take a pledge to drive cell-free at: https://www.nsc.org/forms/distracteddriving_pledge.aspx

¹ <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html>

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*. The related research article may be found also in the publication *Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations* by the US Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, <http://www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Driver-Distraction-Commercial-Vehicle-Operations.pdf>

⁴ *Ibid*. See also the related research report, *A decrease in brain activation associated with driving when listening to people speak*, by Marcel Adam Just, Timothy A. Keller, Jacquelyn Cynkar, <http://www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/carnegie-mellon.pdf>

⁵ http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Documents/Cognitive%20Distraction%20White%20Paper.pdf

⁶ http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Distracted_Driving/

⁷ <http://www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Distracted-Driving-2009.pdf>