

Driving and Dialing

Pre-reading

Questions:

- How many people do you think use cell phones while driving?
- Do you think it's safe to "drive and dial"?
- What are you hoping to learn from this reading?

Definitions:

- Prohibit – to not allow by law

Reading

(Source: Insurance Information Institute, www.iii.org)



Photo courtesy of the Texas State Office of Risk Management – which neither endorses SW ABE or this information.

17 In the United States over 190 million people used cell phones as of June 2005, compared with
36 approximately 4.3 million in 1990. Increased reliance on cell phones has led to a rise in the number of
people who use them while driving.

42 There are two dangers with driving and using a cell phone. First, drivers must take their eyes off the
61 road while dialing. Second, people can become so absorbed in their conversations that their ability to
77 concentrate on the act of driving is severely impaired.

86 Since the first law banning hand-held cell phone use while driving was passed in New York in 2001,
104 there has been **debate** as to the exact nature and degree of hazard. At first safety experts focused on the
124 problem as part of the larger one of driver **distractions** in general. These can include anything that reduces
142 driver concentration on road hazards such as drinking coffee or talking with another passenger.

156 Now there is increasing evidence that the dangers associated with cell phone use outweigh those of
172 other distractions. Safety experts also acknowledge that the hazard posed by cell phone conversations is not
188 eliminated, and may even be increased, by the use of hands-free sets.

200 A government study released in June 2005 indicates that the distraction of cell phones and other
216 wireless devices was far more likely to lead to crashes than other distractions faced by drivers. Researchers
233 tracked 100 cars and their drivers for a year and concluded that talking on cell phones caused far more
252 crashes, near-crashes and other incidents than other distractions.

261 Many studies have shown that using hand-held cell phones while driving can constitute a hazardous
276 distraction. What about a hands-free phone? Studies show the use of hands-free sets may even be worse.

293 A study from the University of Utah found that motorists who talked on hands-free cell phones were
310 18 percent slower in braking and took 17 percent longer to regain the speed they lost when they braked. An
330 earlier University of Utah study by the same researchers found that drivers talking on hands-free cell phones
347 were less likely to recall seeing pedestrians, billboards or other roadside features.

359 Cell phones play an **integral** role in our society. However, the convenience they offer must be
375 judged against the hazards they pose. The number of state legislatures debating measures that address the
391 problem of cell phone use while driving continues to rise. Four states -- Colorado, Delaware, Maryland and
407 Tennessee -- banned their use by young drivers in 2005. In May of the same year, the city of Chicago
426 banned the use of hand held cell phones while driving.

436 The U.S. is not the only country with laws about cell phone use while driving. As many as 40 other
456 countries restrict or prohibit the use of driving and dialing.

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Understanding

1. What does the word **distraction** mean? _____

2. List some types of distractions. What is one of the worst kinds? _____

3. Are hands-free sets safer than hand-held phones? Why or why not? _____

4. What is a synonym for the word **integral**? _____

5. Which research findings surprised you the most? _____

6. Which research findings surprised you the least? _____

7. What does the word **debate** mean? _____

8. Which state was the first to ban the use of hand-held cell phones while driving? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about your own cell phone use while driving. If you don't own a cell phone, write about others you know who "drive and dial." Do you know someone who has been in an accident due to cell phone use? Explain.

Option C: What kind of laws, if any, do think there should be about cell phone use while driving? Why?
