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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The best way to help fight distracted driving is to get educated, and this page is a great place to start. Below are answers to some frequently asked questions that will help you better understand the safety threat posed by texting and cell phone use on America's roadways.

- 1. Is distracted driving really a problem?**

Distracted driving kills. The friends, family, and neighbors of the thousands of people killed each year in distracted driving crashes will tell you it is a very serious safety problem. The nearly half a million people injured each year will agree.
- 2. What is distracted driving?**

Distraction occurs any time you take your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off your primary task: driving safely. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.
- 3. If it's so dangerous, why do people do it?**

Some people still don't know how dangerous distracted driving is. Others know about the risks of texting and talking while driving, but still choose to do so anyway. They make the mistake of thinking the statistics don't apply to them, that they can defy the odds. Still others simply lead busy, stressful lives and use cell phones and smartphones to stay connected with their families, friends, and workplaces. They forget or choose not to shut these devices off when they get behind the wheel.
- 4. Who are the most serious offenders?**

Our youngest and most inexperienced drivers are most at risk, with 16% of all distracted driving crashes involving drivers under 20. But they are not alone. At any given moment during daylight hours, over 660,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using a hand-held cell phone.
- 5. Sending or reading one text is pretty quick, unlike a phone conversation - wouldn't that be okay?**

Texting is the most alarming distraction because it involves manual, visual, and cognitive distraction simultaneously. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded. It's extraordinarily dangerous.
- 6. Is it safe to use a hands-free device to talk on a cell phone while driving?**

So far, the research indicates that the cognitive distraction of having a hands-free phone conversation causes drivers to miss the important visual and audio cues that would ordinarily help you avoid a crash.
- 7. Why doesn't the U.S. Department of Transportation make distracted driving illegal?**

Passenger car driving behavior falls under the jurisdiction of the individual states, so the U.S. DOT can't ban it. Congress has considered a number of good laws to prevent distracted driving, but unfortunately nothing has passed yet. However, many states have stepped up to pass tough laws against texting, talking on a cell phone, and other distractions. You can visit our **State Laws** page to learn about the laws in your state.
- 8. What else can DOT do to prevent distracted driving?**

Even though we can't make texting or talking on a cell phone while driving illegal, we have been pretty busy. Please visit our **DOT Action** page to learn more.
- 9. What can I do to help?**

We're glad you asked! You've already taken the first step by visiting this site and learning about the dangers of distracted driving. The next thing you'll want to do is protect yourself. **Take the pledge** to drive phone-free and turn your cell phone off when you turn your ignition on. And if you're a passenger, make sure your driver does the same. If you want to do more, please take a look at our **Take Action** section - we've got plenty of ideas to get you started.