



March 13, 2009

The Honorable Berta Gardner
Alaska State Capitol, Room 424
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Gardner:

We are pleased to offer the National Safety Council's support of HB15, an Act prohibiting the use of cellular telephones by minors while driving a motor vehicle, to be considered by the Alaska Legislature during its 2009 session.

The National Safety Council applauds the Alaska Legislature for considering HB15. This Act's prohibition of cellular telephone use by teens while driving in Alaska would be a major step toward improving the safety of its citizens. As "novice" drivers, teens lack driving experience and tend to ignore risks; consequently, they are proportionately involved in twice as many fatal crashes as drivers 35-74 years of age. This is why the NSC and many other transportation safety leaders advocate that Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws include a ban on teen driver cell phone and text messaging use while driving. At present sixteen states have a similar provision in their teen driver licensing law.

It is estimated that 80% of preventable motor vehicle crashes are caused in part by some form of driver inattention. Scientific research has determined that talking on a cell phone increases a driver's risk of a crash by four times. One study has reported that text messaging while driving increased the odds of a crash by six times. We invite the Alaska legislature to consider further action restricting the use of cell phones for all drivers and offer you the following links to scientifically reliable information for your reference should you wish to consider such action.

<http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/factsheet.aspx>

<http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/distracteddriving.aspx>

The National Safety Council is a non-profit organization that saves lives at work, at home, in communities and on the roads through leadership, research, education and advocacy. During the last forty years, the NSC has trained over sixty million drivers in defensive driving techniques. Please contact John Ulczykcki, NSC's Group Vice President for Research, Communications, and Advocacy (john.ulczykcki@nsc.org or 630-775-2160) if we may offer further assistance.

Sincerely,

Janet Froetscher
President & CEO