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National Safety Council Estimates that At Least 1.6 Million Crashes are Caused Each Year by Drivers Using Cell Phones and Texting

Washington, DC – The National Safety Council announced today that it estimates at least 28% of all traffic crashes – or at least 1.6 million crashes each year – are caused by drivers using cell phones and texting. NSC estimates that 1.4 million crashes each year are caused by drivers using cell phones and a minimum of 200,000 additional crashes each year are caused by drivers who are texting. The announcement came on the one-year anniversary of NSC's call for a ban on all cell phone use and texting while driving.

"We now know that at least 1.6 million crashes are caused by drivers using cell phones and texting," said Janet Froetscher, president & CEO of the National Safety Council. "We know that cell phone use is a very risky distraction and texting is even higher risk. We now know that cell phone use causes many more crashes than texting. The main reason is that millions more drivers use cell phones than text," she said. "That is why we need to address both texting and cell phone use on our roads."

"This new estimate provides critical data for legislators, business leaders and individuals to evaluate the threat and need for legislation, business policies and personal actions to prevent cell phone use and texting while driving," Froetscher said. "There was great progress made in 2009, particularly regarding a broad recognition that texting is dangerous. We now need the same broad consensus that recognizes cell phone use while driving causes even more crashes."

Froetscher said public support for laws banning cell phone use while driving is gaining momentum.

"Public opinion research conducted in 2009 by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and Nationwide Insurance show public support for total bans on cell phones at 43 and 57 percent respectively," Froetscher said. "With public support now around 50 percent, we will continue to educate people about the risks of cell phone use while driving and the value of effectively-enforced laws in changing behavior and reducing crashes."

In constructing its estimates, NSC used widely-accepted statistical methods and analysis based on data of driver cell phone use from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and from peer-reviewed research that quantifies the risk of using a cell phone and texting while driving. NSC's statistical model and estimates were peer-reviewed by academic researchers in traffic safety and biostatistics.

The estimate of 25% of all crashes -- or 1.4 million crashes -- caused by cell phone use was derived from NHTSA data showing 11% of drivers at any one time are using cell phones and from peer-reviewed research reporting cell phone use increases crash risk by four times. The estimate of an additional minimum 3% of crashes -- or 200,000 crashes -- caused by texting was derived by NHTSA data showing 1% of drivers at any one time are manipulating their device in ways that

include texting and from research reporting texting increases crash risk by 8 times. Using the highest risk for texting reported by research of 23 times results in a maximum of 1 million crashes due to texting; still less than the 1.4 million crashes caused by other cell phone use.

The National Safety Council (www.nsc.org) saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

NSC Press Kit

[Cell Phone Fact Sheet](#)

[Public Opinion Fact Sheet](#)

[Attributable Risk Estimate \(Cell Phones & Texting\)](#)

[Risk Estimate Model \(Full Study\)](#)

[Risk Estimate Summary](#)

[Risk Estimate Table](#)

[NSC Bios](#)

NSC Media Coverage

NSC received significant media coverage on Jan. 12 when it announced that 28 percent of crashes are caused by drivers using their cell phones. NSC also announced the launch of FocusDriven - Advocates for Cell-Free Driving. Below are some highlights of this coverage.

[ABC News](#)

[CBS News](#)

[CBS News "The Early Show"](#)

[FOX News](#)

[MSNBC](#)

[Oprah Winfrey Show](#)

[New York Times Series on Distracted Driving](#)

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PRESS IMAGES



A student talks on a hands-free cell phone while operating a high-tech driving simulator. The simulator was used during a University of Utah study that found motorists who talk on cell phones while driving are as impaired as drunken drivers with blood-alcohol levels at the legal limit of 0.08 percent.

Photo Credit: Jim Moulin

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DRIVERS ON CELL PHONES ARE AS BAD AS DRUNKS

UTAH PSYCHOLOGISTS WARN AGAINST CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING

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June 29, 2006 -- Three years after the preliminary results first were presented at a scientific meeting and drew wide attention, University of Utah psychologists have published a study showing that motorists who talk on handheld or hands-free cellular phones are as impaired as drunken drivers.

"We found that people are as impaired when they drive and talk on a cell phone as they are when they drive intoxicated at the legal blood-alcohol limit" of 0.08 percent, which is the minimum level that defines illegal drunken driving in most U.S. states, says study co-author Frank Drews, an assistant professor of psychology. "If legislators really want to address driver distraction, then they should consider outlawing cell phone use while driving."

Psychology Professor David Strayer, the study's lead author, adds: "Just like you put yourself and other people at risk when you drive drunk, you put yourself and others at risk when you use a cell phone and drive. The level of impairment is very similar."

"Clearly the safest course of action is to not use a cell phone while driving," concludes the study by Strayer, Drews and Dennis Crouch, a research associate professor of pharmacology and toxicology. The study was set for publication June 29 in the summer 2006 issue of *Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*.

The study reinforced earlier research by Strayer and Drews showing that hands-free cell phones are just as distracting as handheld cell phones because the conversation itself -- not just manipulation of a handheld phone -- distracts drivers from road conditions.

Human Factors Editor Nancy J. Cooke praised the study: "Although we all have our suspicions about the dangers of cell phone use while driving, human factors research on driver safety helps us move beyond mere suspicions to scientific observations of driver behavior."

The study first gained public notice after Strayer presented preliminary results in July 2003 in Park City, Utah, during the Second International Driving Symposium on Human Factors in Driver Assessment, Training and Vehicle Design. It took until now for the study to be completed, undergo review by other researchers and finally be published.

Key Findings: Different Driving Styles, Similar Impairment

Each of the study's 40 participants "drove" a PatrolSim driving simulator four times: once each while undistracted, using a handheld cell phone, using a hands-free cell phone and while intoxicated to the 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level after drinking vodka and orange juice. Participants followed a simulated pace car that braked intermittently.

Both handheld and hands-free cell phones impaired driving, with no significant difference in the degree of impairment. That "calls into question driving regulations that prohibited handheld cell phones and permit hands-free cell phones," the researchers write.

The study found that compared with undistracted drivers:

- Motorists who talked on either handheld or hands-free cell phones drove slightly slower, were 9 percent slower to hit the brakes, displayed 24 percent more variation in following distance as their attention switched between driving and conversing, were 19 percent slower to resume normal speed after braking and were more likely to crash. Three study participants rear-ended the pace car. All were talking on cell phones. None were drunk.

- Drivers drunk at the 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level drove a bit more slowly than both undistracted drivers and drivers using cell phones, yet more aggressively. They followed the pace car more closely, were twice as likely to brake only four seconds before a collision would have occurred, and hit their brakes with 23 percent more force. "Neither accident rates, nor reaction times to vehicles braking in front of the participant, nor recovery of lost speed following braking differed significantly" from undistracted drivers, the researchers write.

"Impairments associated with using a cell phone while driving can be as profound as those associated with driving while drunk," they conclude.

Are Drunken Drivers Really Less Accident-Prone than Cell Phone Users?

Drews says the lack of accidents among the study's drunken drivers was surprising. He and Strayer speculate that because simulated drives were conducted during mornings, participants who got drunk were well-rested and in the "up" phase of intoxication. In reality, 80 percent of all fatal alcohol-related accidents occur between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. when drunken drivers tend to be fatigued. Average blood-alcohol levels in those accidents are twice 0.08 percent. Forty percent of the roughly 42,000 annual U.S. traffic fatalities involve alcohol.

While none of the study's intoxicated drivers crashed, their hard, late braking is "predictive of increased accident rates over the long run," the researchers wrote.

One statistical analysis of the new and previous Utah studies showed cell phone users were 5.36 times more likely to get in an accident than undistracted drivers. Other studies have shown the risk is about the same as for drivers with a 0.08 blood-alcohol level.

Strayer says he expects criticism "suggesting that we are trivializing drunken-driving impairment, but it is anything but the case. We don't think people should drive while drunk, nor should they talk on their cell phone while driving."

Drews says he and Strayer compared the impairment of motorists using cell phones to drivers with a 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level because they wanted to determine if the risk of driving while phoning was comparable to the drunken driving risk considered unacceptable.

"This study does not mean people should start driving drunk," says Drews. "It means that driving while talking on a cell phone is as bad as or maybe worse than driving drunk, which is completely unacceptable and cannot be tolerated by society."

University of Utah Cell Phone Research

Previous research by Strayer, Drews and colleagues include:

- A 2001 study showing that hands-free cell phones are just as distracting as handheld cell phones.
- A 2003 study showing that the reason is "inattention blindness," in which motorists look directly at road conditions but don't really see them because they are distracted by a cell phone conversation. And such drivers aren't aware they are impaired.
- A 2005 study suggesting that when teenagers and young adults talk on cell phones while driving, their reaction times are as slow as those of elderly drivers.

The University of Utah psychologists conducted the alcohol study because a 1997 study by other researchers evaluated the cell phone records of 699 people involved in motor vehicle accidents and found one-fourth of them had used their phone in the 10 minutes before their accident – a four-fold increase in accidents compared with undistracted motorists.

Those researchers speculated there was a comparable risk from drunken driving and cell phone use while driving. So Strayer and Drews conducted a controlled laboratory study.

The study included 25 men and 15 women ages 22 to 34 who were social drinkers (three to five drinks per week) recruited via newspaper advertisements. Two-thirds used a cell phone while driving. Each participant was paid \$100 for 10 hours in the study.

The driving simulator has a steering wheel, dashboard instruments and brake and gas pedals from a Ford Crown Victoria sedan. The driver is surrounded by three screens showing freeway scenes. Each simulated daylight freeway drive lasted 15 minutes. The pace car intermittently braked to mimic stop-and-go traffic. Drivers who fail to hit their brakes eventually rear-end the pace car. Other simulated vehicles occasionally passed in the left lane, giving the impression of steady traffic flow.

Each study participant drove the simulator during three sessions – undistracted, drunk or talking to a research assistant on a cell phone – each on a different day.

The simulator recorded driving speed, following distance, braking time and how long it would take to collide with the pace car if brakes were not used.

The study was funded by a \$25,000 grant from the Federal Aviation Administration – which is interested in impaired attention among pilots – and by Strayer's and Drews' salaries. The Utah Highway Patrol loaned the researchers a device to measure blood-alcohol levels.

Driving while Distracted: A Growing Problem

The researchers cited figures from the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association indicating that more than 100 million U.S. motorists use cell phones while driving. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration estimates that at any given moment during daylight hours, 8 percent of all drivers are talking on a cell phone.

"Fortunately, the percentage of drunk drivers at any time is much lower," Drews says. "So it means the risk of talking on a cell phone and driving is probably much higher than driving intoxicated because more people are talking on cell phones while driving than are driving drunk." The main reason there are not more accidents is that "92 percent of drivers are not on a cell phone and are compensating for drivers on cell phones," he adds.

Cell phone use is far from the only distraction for motorists. The researchers cite talking to passengers, eating, drinking, lighting cigarettes, applying makeup and listening to the radio as the "old standards" of driver distraction.

"However, over the last decade many new electronic devices have been developed, and they are making their way into the vehicle," the researchers write. "Drivers can now surf the Internet, send and receive e-mail or faxes, communicate via a cellular device and even watch television. There is good reason to believe that some of these new multitasking activities may be substantially more distracting than the old standards because they are more cognitively engaging and because they are performed over longer periods of time."

News media may obtain a copy of the study by emailing leesiegel@ucomm.utah.edu or, starting June 29, by going to <http://hfes.org> and clicking on "What's New"

Other studies by Strayer and colleagues on cell phones and driving may be downloaded from: <http://www.psych.utah.edu/AppliedCognitionLab/>

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**Woman Gets Jail
For Cell Phone Car
Crash That Killed
H.S. Girl**

**'Just Let It
Ring' Is
Britnee
Moore's
Message To
Others**

POSTED: 10:59 am EDT
July 30, 2009
UPDATED: 1:17 pm EDT
July 31, 2009

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Driver In Car Crash Apologizes To Family

POSTED: 4:32 pm EST July 30, 2009

UPDATED: 4:50 pm EST July 30, 2009

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Britnee Moore expresses remorse as a judge sends her to jail for causing a car crash that killed 16-year-old Hope Maley.

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WAYNESBURG,

Pa. -- A young

Waynesburg woman expressed remorse Thursday as a judge ordered her to serve jail time for causing a car crash that killed a 16-year-old high school student.

Britnee Moore, 20, was found guilty in June of homicide by vehicle. Judge William Nalitz sentenced her to no less than five months and no more than 36 months in the Greene County Jail.

"The judge did say during the sentencing that no sentence would help the family, but I disagree. I was hoping she would be mandated to a state prison," said Hope Maley's mother, Darlene. "Hope's life matters, and I just have not seen any remorse. The defendant has never apologized in over 2 1/2 years."

Maley's family said Moore never apologized to them. Outside the courtroom on Thursday, Moore did tell Channel 4 Action News that she was sorry.

"I'm just real sorry for my actions and I hope a lot of other people learn from this," said Moore, who told reporters, "I take full responsibility for this."

More: [Read Britnee Moore's Letter To Victim's Family \(PDF\)](#)

State police said Moore was going too fast in a 45 mph zone and reaching for a cell phone when her car collided head-on with Hope Maley's car in Franklin Township in March 2007.

Maley, who attended Waynesburg High School, was pronounced dead at the scene of the wreck on a curvy section of Route 218 near Randy Hoge Road.

Asked if she had a message for the Maley family, Moore said, "I'm very sorry for your loss. My prayers go out to you."

More: [Read Hope Maley's Mother's Letter To Judge](#)

Police estimated that Maley was driving somewhere between 25 mph and 47 mph when the collision happened.

In addition to the homicide by vehicle charge, Moore was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment.

Moore hopes her example will teach people "not to pick up their cell phone when they're driving. Just let it ring, no matter how important your call is, and don't rush."

Previous Stories:

- June 29, 2009: ['Run For Hope'](#)



Britnee Moore



Hope Maley

[Remembers Greene Co. Teen Crash Victim](#)

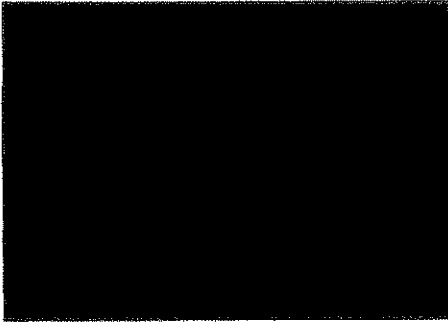
- June 4, 2009: [Woman, 20, Guilty In Car Collision That Killed High School Girl](#)

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WSOCTV.com

Stanley Teen Killed In Crash Using Cell Phone While Driving



Posted: 5:34 pm EDT September 7, 2009 Updated: 8:43 am EDT September 8, 2009

GASTON COUNTY, N.C. -- A 16-year-old Stanley girl crashed while using a cell phone and died Sunday night, witnesses and investigators said.

Brittany Johnson, an East Gaston High School student, was driving on Mauney Road toward Stanley when she wrecked at about 6:30 p.m. Troopers said she ran off the right side of the road, struck an embankment, went airborne and then hit a utility pole.

Rescue crews found the teen's Chevrolet Lumina on its side, and it appeared the top of the car hit the utility pole just above the teen's head before the car spun around. Johnson was pronounced dead at the scene.

Neighbors who heard the crash ran out to help. Greg Burch said the car was wrapped like a horseshoe around the pole.

"We tried to help her out, but we couldn't do nothing for her," Burch said.

Burch said he found Johnson's cell phone on the ground nearby, and it had an unfinished text message to her mother on the screen.

He said he used the number marked "Mom" to make a heartbreaking phone call.

"I asked her if her daughter drove a green Lumina," Burch said.

He said he told her to come to the scene quickly, but she asked the question he didn't want to answer.

"It was tough. She asked me how she was, and I said, 'I don't know,'" Burch said.

He said he suspected the worst, but he didn't want to say it.

On Monday, Johnson's grandmother hugged Burch and thanked him for making the call.

She whispered a little goodbye as she stared down at the growing memorial of flowers, stuffed animals and notes placed at the scene by friends and supporters.

"It hurts, Brit. It hurts, but I know you are with God now so you'll be OK," Helen Anderson said.

Anderson said Johnson was her first grandchild. She said she hopes other teens will learn from the tragedy.

"I hope they learn their lesson and don't put their families what we are going through now. Don't text and drive. It's not that important," she said.

Classmates and friends cried together at the pole Monday. Johnson's boyfriend put her picture on the pole, and together they silently said goodbye.

"I'll always love her," Anderson said.

Family members said they are still working on funeral plans. A memorial service for Johnson was held at the First Baptist Church in Stanley on Monday evening.

North Carolina is one of nine states that bans texting for certain groups. In some cases, they restrict drivers younger than 18, and in others, the ban has to do with restrictions on the license, not the driver.

On Dec. 1, North Carolina will join a group of 18 states that have total bans, which restrict all drivers from texting while driving.

South Carolina does not have any sort of cell phone ban, but it could be forced to adopt one if Congress goes ahead with a nationwide ban.

Several studies have indicated how dangerous texting while driving can be. A study from Car And Driver magazine found texting is more dangerous than driving drunk. A study out of Virginia Tech found text messaging could take the driver's eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. That's equal to driving the length of a football field at 55 mph

• **LINK:** [Virginia Tech Study On Cell Phone Use And Driving Distraction](#)

• **LINK:** [Car And Driver: Texting While Driving Feature](#)

Previous Stories:

- June 10, 2009: [N.C. Lawmakers Vote to Ban Texting While Driving](#)
- February 10, 2009: [Text-Messaging Ban For N.C. Drivers Sought In House](#)
- November 16, 2007: [Texting Drivers Put Others At Risk](#)

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PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Crash survivor urges cell-phone ban

By Brad Bumsted
STATE CAPITOL REPORTER
Thursday, March 12, 2009

HARRISBURG — Jacy Good lost her parents in a May vehicle crash she says could have been avoided if the driver at fault had not been talking on a hand-held cell phone.

The Goods were returning to their Lancaster County home on the day that Jacy, 22, graduated from Muhlenberg College in Allentown. Jay and Jean Good, both 57, died in the crash on Route 222 when their station wagon, stuffed with Jacy's belongings, was hit by a tractor-trailer that swerved to avoid a minivan that ran a red light, police say.

Jacy Good suffered a shattered pelvis, several broken bones and a brain injury.

Now she is the "face" of a state House effort to ban hand-held cell phone use by drivers and to make text messaging while driving illegal.

"I will not stop until this bill becomes law," Good said Wednesday after a news conference. Enacting the law would honor her parents, she said.

"Paramedics and the doctors were giving her a less than 10 percent chance" of living, said Northern Berks Regional Police Chief Scott Eaken. He confirmed the 18-year-old minivan driver was talking on a cell phone when the crash happened and was cited for traffic violations.

Berks County District Attorney John Adams said he decided against filing charges of homicide by vehicle or involuntary manslaughter because his office could not establish that the driver ran the light because he was on the phone. It did not rise to the level of "reckless or gross negligence" as it might have if the driver were intoxicated or speeding 30 miles above the limit, Adams said.

"The guy was on the phone with somebody from Bible camp or Bible school," he said, but added, "An inexperienced driver should not be on a cell phone."

Rep. Josh Shapiro, a Montgomery County Democrat, cited Good's story, other crash statistics and the bill's 70 co-sponsors as reasons he believes lawmakers will pass the legislation. He began pushing the idea four years ago without much data. His bill failed to gain traction last session.

"We've got the technology available today to save lives in Pennsylvania," Shapiro said.

But Matthew Brouillette, president of the Commonwealth Foundation, a conservative policy group, said he isn't convinced the bill would make the highways safer.

"There is no way to adequately regulate and punish activities that distract drivers," Brouillette said. "Whether it is eating, putting on makeup or talking on the phone, the issue is more about personal responsibility and paying the consequences for bad decisions than trying to come up with another law that has not proven to make our roads safer."

Under the bill, violators would be charged with a summary offense carrying a \$50 fine. Motorists could use speaker phones or cell phones with earpieces.

About 1,200 crashes involving drivers with hand-held phones occur in Pennsylvania each year, according to PennDOT figures. Fifty-six crashes in 2007 involved drivers using hands-free cell phones, Shapiro said.

Six states, including New York and New Jersey, have enacted bans, as has the District of Columbia.

"My friends from New York and New Jersey don't understand why Pennsylvania is having trouble passing this bill," Good said.

Pollster Mike Young, a former political science professor at Penn State University, said the average Pennsylvanian probably places the issue far down a growing list of things to worry about.

"Pennsylvania is not an 'early adopter' of most reforms, nor an enthusiastic advocate of state restrictions on social behavior," he said.

Senate Transportation Chairman Rob Wonderling, a Republican from Montgomery County, said the Senate's priority is "to put Pennsylvanians back to work."

Wonderling said a cell phone ban likely won't be debated early this session, but he wouldn't rule it out. He said he would take a "deliberative approach" with any such bill, weighing others' views.

Verizon Wireless supports statewide legislation to ban hand-held cell phones while driving but questions municipal regulations that drivers can find confusing, said Laura Merritt, a Dublin, Ohio-based spokeswoman for the company.

"We will certainly not oppose anything of that nature. We strongly encourage our drivers to focus on driving," Merritt said.

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