



NHTSA 08-13
Friday, April 5, 2013
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Motorists are urged to put down their electronic devices and focus on driving during National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today released new survey results that show that Americans continue to use electronic devices while driving, despite warnings that it causes their own driving to deteriorate and can lead to crashes, injuries and even death. The new data are being released at the start of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

The new data include statistics from the 2012 Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors Survey and the 2011 National Occupant Protection Use Survey on Driver Electronics Use, as well as the 2011 Distraction Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data. All three reports are being highlighted in the premier issue of NHTSA's **SAFETY 1N NUM3ERS** online monthly auto safety newsletter.

Today's 2011 National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) [shows that](#) at any given daylight moment across America, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving, a number that has held steady since 2010. According to separate NHTSA data, more than 3,300 people were killed in 2011 and 387,000 were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver.

"Distracted driving is a serious and deadly epidemic on America's roadways," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. "There is no way to text and drive safely. Powering down your cell phone when you're behind the wheel can save lives - maybe even your own."

According to NHTSA's 2012 National Survey on Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors, most drivers support bans on hand-held cell phone use (74 percent) and texting while driving (94 percent). On average, these drivers thought the fines for these offenses should be at least \$200.

So far 39 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands ban text messaging for all drivers. Also 10 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while driving.

"Many drivers see distracted driving as risky when other drivers do it, but do not recognize how their own driving deteriorates," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "I urge all motorists to use common sense and keep their attention focused solely on the task of safely driving."

More than 6,000 respondents age 16 and older were interviewed by phone for the National Survey on Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors. Almost half of drivers said they answer an incoming call and one in four drivers are willing to place a call on all, most, or some trips. Slightly fewer are willing to make a call while driving compared to 2010 (28% to 24%), but there is little if any change in those who answer a call while driving (52% to 49%). Considering that in 2011 there were almost 212 million licensed drivers in the America, about 102 million drivers were answering calls and 50 million drivers were placing calls while driving.

To prevent distracted driving, the Department of Transportation recommends that drivers:

- Turn off electronic devices and put them out of reach before starting to drive.

- Be good role models for young drivers and set a good example. Talk with your teens about responsible driving.
- Speak up when you are a passenger and your driver uses an electronic device while driving. Offer to make the call for the driver, so his or her full attention stays on the driving task.
- Always wear your seat belt. Seat belts are the best defense against other unsafe drivers.

>> Read about Distracted Driving in NHTSA's [premier issue of SAFETY 1N NUM3ERS](#), a new online monthly newsletter on hot topics in auto safety - including problem identification, people at risk, and recommended practices and solutions to mitigate injury and death on our nation's roadways.

>> View the [National Survey on Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behaviors](#)

>> View 2011 [distraction fatality data](#)

>> For more information about distracted driving, visit [Distraction.gov](#).