

Texting while driving not a smart idea

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

It's a common visual: A driver glances to the car that's pulled up alongside it at a stoplight to find that driver with cell phone in hand typing a message on the keypad. Many drivers do not even wait until coming to a stop before texting—they simply do so while keeping up with traffic, a danger that's causing accidents on the country's roadways.

Texting is distracting drivers all across North America and beyond. Thirty states in the U.S. have made texting while driving illegal, but many people still continue to do it.

The U.S. Department of Transportation reports that nearly 6,000 people were killed on American roads in 2008 in accidents caused by distracted drivers. Many of these drivers were teenagers, who may have been talking or texting on a phone.

When a person devotes attention to a cell phone, even for a few seconds, he or she can travel the distance of a football field without eyes on the road. What's more, talking or texting diverts a part of the brain that is needed to focus on driving. While individuals are able to multi-task, they should limit the amount of distractions while driving because there is already an overload of stimuli commanding drivers' attention.

Sixty percent of teens admit to texting while driving, according to a 2009 survey. Overall, 26 percent of respondents admitted to doing it despite knowing it was dangerous. More than 80 percent of people believe DWT, or driving while texting, should be banned.

Studies conducted in virtual driving simulators have shown DWT to be deadly. People doing it change speeds rapidly for no reason, and they weave in and out of lanes. Additional research has indicated that using a cell phone in any matter while driving is on par with driving drunk.

What these studies boil down to is that when behind the wheel of a car, drivers should simply stick to driving. Even searching for music files or eating a snack can reduce concentration on the road—something that may end in accidents.