

Keep eyes on the road, not on your phone

Distracted Driving Awareness Month underway

THE COLONY, Texas — The National Safety Council designates April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Council statistics from 2014 indicate distracted driving is the nation’s third-leading cause of roadway fatalities behind alcohol and speeding.

In The Colony, there were 329 accidents on Main Street in 2015. The majority was attributed to failure to control speed but nearly 10 percent were caused by distracted driving.

Community Resource Officer Kyle Koiner from The Colony Police Department said using a mobile device while driving is akin to driving intoxicated.

“Distracted driving, especially those behaviors that take your eyes off the road like text messaging or checking emails, significantly slows your reaction time,” Koiner said. “Those few seconds when your attention is elsewhere can be the difference between life and death.”

In conjunction with the Safety Council’s initiative, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) promotes its annual “Talk, Text, Crash” campaign each April to encourage drivers to turn off their devices and give their full attention to the road.

According to TxDOT, there were 103,576 crashes in Texas in 2015 involving distracted driving — a 3-percent increase from the previous year. TxDOT cites the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which says drivers using a mobile phone are four times more likely to cause serious injury in a crash. Furthermore, nearly one in five traffic crashes in Texas is caused by a distracted driver.



“[In 2015], driver distractions killed 463 Texans and seriously injured another 3,076 Texans,” said Texas Transportation Commissioner Jeff Moseley in a release from TxDOT. “Texans are dying on our roads simply because some drivers cannot wait until they’re stopped to check their email or make a phone call. That one text, post or phone call is not worth injuring or killing yourself, or someone else.”

Text messaging is particularly dangerous, according to TxDOT, which highlights research conducted by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute that showed it takes a driver double the amount of time to react when they are distracted by text messaging. Additionally, sending or receiving a text takes a driver’s eyes away from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that’s the equivalent of driving the length of a football field while blindfolded.

While mobile phone use is the most recognizable driving distraction, any type of behavior that draws a motorist’s attention away from driving is dangerous. Drivers are urged to refrain from:

- texting;
- checking email;
- eating and drinking;
- grooming;
- reading;
- programming a navigation system; and,
- adjusting music or other audio device.

If a distraction requires immediate attention, drivers are encouraged to pull over to a safe location and come to a complete stop before diverting their attention.

Lastly, while road construction in The Colony is a sign of progress, those conditions require even more care and attention from drivers, Koiner said.

“Lane closures and traffic switches demand a driver’s complete attention as it is, let alone driving while distracted,” he said. “Please help ensure the safety of workers, pedestrians, fellow motorists, and yourself by slowing down in construction zones and keeping your eyes on the road, not on your phone.”

For more information, contact Koiner at 972-625-1887 or go online to the National Safety Council’s [website](#) and/or the Texas Department of Transportation’s [website](#).

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