



Key Messages for TETAF Distracted Driving Campaign

Distracted driving, including texting while driving, has become a major problem, causing more and more motor vehicle accidents. The EMS and trauma professionals of Texas are speaking up about the dangers of distracted driving and are encouraging individuals behind the wheel to “Just Drive!”

If your eyes aren’t focused on the road, if your hands are not on the wheel or your mind is not focused 100 percent on driving, you are a distracted driver. In 2011 alone, over 3,000 people were killed in distracted driving crashes, according to www.distraction.gov.

All distractions endanger driver, passenger and bystander safety. These types of distractions include:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

Distracted driving also can occur from fatigue, physical conditions or emotional upset, although texting is by far the most serious distraction because it requires the driver’s visual, manual and cognitive attention.

If you eat right, exercise, manage your weight, don’t smoke and wear your seat belt, why jeopardize your healthy lifestyle by driving distracted? You want to arrive alive, and that means you need to “Just Drive,” watching out for other drivers who may not be paying close attention.

Those who text while driving are 23 times more likely to be in a crash. When drivers send or read a text message, their reaction time is doubled. Humans really cannot multi-task safely. When someone gets behind the wheel, his or her full attention should be on driving.

Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded. It's extraordinarily dangerous.

Text messaging is banned for all drivers in 39 states and the District of Columbia. Gov. Rick Perry vetoed similar legislation in 2011, and the Legislature failed to pass a statewide prohibition in 2013 due to his veto promise. While the governor opposes government micromanagement of adults' behavior, clearly drivers are not using good judgment and are endangering themselves and others. Texas prohibits smoking and other dangerous behavior for the good of the many, and distracted driving should be no different.

Texas does ban the use of handheld phones and texting in school zones for all drivers. In addition to banning texting for school bus and novice drivers (those under age 18), Texas prohibits all cell phone use for these drivers. While it's appropriate to prohibit distracted driving in school zones, why would Texas condone it elsewhere? Drivers should be vigilant and "just drive." No message or phone call is so important that it can't wait a few minutes.

