

Cell Phone Use and Driving Among Teens

Cell Phone Use and Crashes in Utah¹

According to the Utah Department of Public Safety 2011 crash data:

- Cell phone use is the second leading driver distraction in Utah (trailing only “other inside distraction”), accounting for 13.9% of the 4,860 distracted driving crashes.
- Crashes involving a cell phone distracted driver were 1.5 times more likely to result in an injury when compared to all crashes.
- Drivers distracted by cell phones were 53% more likely to be age 15-19 compared to all drivers involved in crashes.
- Drivers age 15-19 represented 18.8% of drivers in a crash who were using a cellphone compared to 13.2% of drivers who were in a crash.

Cell Phone Use Behaviors Among Teens²

According to the 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

- 50% of high school students who drive admit they talk on a cell phone daily while behind the wheel.
- 61% of 12th grade students who drive report they talk on a cell phone daily while driving.

Attitudes Toward Cell Phone Use and Driving³

According to data from a survey conducted in January 2012:

- 85% of Utahns support a law banning cell phone use when driving for teens under age 18.
- 66% of Utahns support a law banning cell phone use when driving for all drivers, regardless of age.
- 93% of Utah adults believe talking on a cell phone while driving increases someone’s chance of being hurt or killed in a crash.

“ Perhaps my son is no longer alive because he was paying attention more closely to his phone than the road in front of him.

- Hyde Park, UT father of a 19-year-old son killed in 2009 ”

“ Distracted by her cell phone, the driver crossed the center line of the highway and crashed into my daughter’s vehicle head-on. Please, put your cell phones away before you drive, so no one else has to experience what we did.

- West Bountiful, UT father of a 19-year-old daughter killed in 2009 ”



According to Cell Phone Studies

- A study by the University of Utah found that drivers who talk on handheld or hands-free cell phones are just as impaired as drunk drivers with a 0.08 blood-alcohol level. (Source: Strayer, D L, Drews, F.A, Crouch, D.J. A comparison of the cell phone driver and the drunk driver. Human Factors, 2006: 48; 381-391.)
- Talking on a cell phone while driving, even if it's hands-free, impairs driving ability. (Source: Just, MA, Keller, TA, Cynkara, JA. Decrease in brain activation associated with driving when listening to someone speak. Brain Research, 2008: 1205; 70-80.)
- Numerous studies show cell phone use impairs driving abilities of young adults. Drivers who used cell phones have 18% slower reaction times while driving and a two-fold increase in the number of rear-end crashes. (Source: Strayer, DL, Drews FA. Profiles in Driver Distraction: Effects of Cell Phone Conversations on Younger and Older Drivers. Human Factors, 2004: 46(4); 640-649.)

Last updated: February 5, 2013

References

¹ Utah Department of Public Safety 2011 crash data.

² Utah Department of Health, Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), 2011 data.

³ Utah Department of Health, Violence and Injury Prevention Program, 2012. Survey was conducted with a representative sample of 1,200 Utah adults across the state, sampling for both landline and cell phone households. Survey has < +/- 5% error margin.

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