



TOIRMA Update

By Jim Donelan

TOIRMA Executive Director

Encourage your family, friends, and constituents to put the phone down

LIKE IT OR NOT, mobile phones have become a part of our daily lives. When you visit your favorite coffee shop or restaurant look around the room and you will quickly notice a significant number of people sitting together not talking with each other, but looking at their phones. During a recent lunch here in Springfield, I noticed a young couple sitting together, and each one was looking at their individual phone. This went on for at least 10 minutes, and I wanted to go over and ask them if they were texting each other. My children are 16 and 13 years old, and they have never known a time when mobile phones weren't a part of their daily lives. There is no question, these little devices are impacting the way we communicate, interact, and behave as a society.

Mobile phones aren't all bad. Just think about all of the arguments that are quickly resolved by a person's ability to "fact check" the topic at hand. Whether it's who has hit the most home runs in a calendar month, or verifying something Calvin Coolidge said or did, cell phones are indeed powerful.

The problem with mobile phones is that people are using these devices when they shouldn't, and are creating significant safety hazards, whether it's while walking down the street, or even worse, while driving a vehicle. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration "approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving." From a risk management perspective, this is quite disturbing.

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety.¹

According to the Official U.S. Government Website for Distractive Driving, 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

The worst distraction of all seems to be texting. Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.²

Facts

- In 2013, 3,154 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.
- 10% of all drivers under the age of 20, involved in fatal crashes, were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted.
- Five seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.
- Headset cell phone use is not substantially safer than hand-held use.³

Governments and transportation officials have reacted by passing laws in 14 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands implementing bans of the use of hand-held electronic devices while driving.⁴ Here in Illinois, state law bans the use of hand-held electronic communication devices, such as cell phones, while driving a motor vehicle. An electronic communication device is defined as: "an electronic device, including but not limited to a hand-held wireless telephone, hand-held personal digital assistant, or portable mobile computer..."⁵ The only way for a driver in Illinois to legally use their mobile phone is to use it in hands free or voice operated mode.

If you ever want an eye opening experience, go online and watch one of the many videos that have been produced regarding distractive driving. Mobile phone companies, car manufacturers, and safety groups have done an excellent job bringing this issue to light.

The United States 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.

As an individual you can help by following the above suggestions, and as an elected official you can assist by increasing the awareness of this alarming issue. Utilize the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's distractive driving resources available at www.distraction.gov. These tools includes pledge forms, public service announcements, statistics, sample policies,

As of September 25, 2015, the following TOIRMA members have not deposited their 2015 Dividend check. If your township/road district is on this list below, please deposit your dividend as soon as possible. Thank you!

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Atlas Township | Pike County |
| Indiantown Township | Bureau County |
| New Haven Township | Gallatin County |

press releases, and posters.

Here at TOIRMA we hope bringing awareness to the problems with distractive driving will aid in keeping you, your family and friends, and township roadways safe.

We hope you find this information helpful. If you have any further questions regarding this topic, please feel free to contact me at (888) 562-7861 or by email at jdonelan@toirma.org.

Thank you and have a great fall!

Sources:

- 1 - <http://www.Distracted.gov>, Official U.S. Government Website for distractive driving
- 2 - <http://www.Distracted.gov>, Official U.S. Government Website for distractive driving – Definition of Distractive Driving
- 3 - <http://www.distraction.gov/stats-research-laws/facts-and-statistics.html>, Official U.S. Government Website for distractive driving – Key Facts and Statistics
- 4 - Governors Highway Safety Association, *Distracted Driving Laws*
http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html
- 5 - 625 ILCS 5/12-610.2(a)



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