



Texas Department of Transportation

Distracted Driving - Talk, Text, Crash Campaign Messages and Media Q&A April 2012

Campaign Messages

Note: Campaign messages are written to educate and create awareness of the risks associated with distracted driving. The message is designed to reduce distracted driving, particularly in young adults (ages 16-34). The following key messages will serve as the foundation for all PR materials geared toward the target audience, including talking points for desk side briefings, grantee and partner outreach and the campaign news release. Key messages will not be provided to media in this format. See media Q&A below.

Distracted driving is a serious issue and is the cause of many traffic crashes and fatalities.

- National data shows that the percentage of driver's texting or visibly manipulating a hand-held device increased from .6 percent in 2009 to .9 percent in 2010. (NHTSA)
- The percentage of drivers holding cell phones to their ears while driving stood at 5 percent in 2010. This means that at a typical daylight moment in 2010, 660,000 vehicles were being driven by people using hand-held cell phones.
- In 2009 alone, nearly 5,500 people were killed and 450,000 more were injured in distracted driving-related crashes. (NHTSA)
- Nearly one in four crashes involves driver distraction in Texas. (TxDOT)
- In Texas in 2011, 81,103 crashes involved distraction in a vehicle, driver inattention or cell-phone use. 361 of these crashes were fatal. (TxDOT)

In Texas and across the nation, cell phone use is one of the major causes of distracted driving-related traffic accidents and fatalities.

- Research indicates that the burden of talking on a cell phone—even if it's hands-free—saps the brain of 39 percent of the energy it would ordinarily devote to safe driving. (NHTSA)
- Using a cell phone while driving delays your reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol concentration of .08, the legal limit for drunk driving. (NHTSA)
- Drivers who use a hand-held device are 4 times more likely to get into a crash serious enough to cause injury. Texting drivers are 23 times more likely to get involved in a crash. (NHTSA)
- In a recent nationwide study, 54 percent of drivers said their driving was no different when talking on the phone. (NHTSA)
- In Texas, 3,147 crashes were attributed to cell phone use in 2011, and 40 of those crashes were fatal—a decrease from the previous year. (TxDOT)

Distracted driving-related crashes and fatalities are highest among young adults.

- Teen drivers are more likely than other age groups to be involved in a fatal crash where distraction is reported. In 2009, 16 percent of teen drivers involved in a fatal crash were reported to have been distracted. (NHTSA)
- In 2009, 40 percent of all American teens say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put people in danger. (Pew)
- In Texas, 46 percent of urban teens and 52 percent of rural teens talk on a cell phone while driving. (Texas Transportation Institute)
- In Texas, 42 percent of urban teens and 48 percent of rural teens text while driving (Texas Transportation Institute)

TxDOT's Talk. Text. Crash. Campaign urges Texans to refrain from engaging in non-driving activities while on the road, especially cell phone use and texting.

- Throughout the month of April (National Distracted Driving Awareness Month) TxDOT will air radio PSAs statewide that remind drivers to put away the phone and drive.
- The PSAs are intended to educate drivers about the dangers of driving while distracted.

Media Q&A

The following Q&A responses can be used by campaign spokespeople. These Qs are intended to address questions about the campaign itself, providing campaign goal sound bytes. Spokespeople will also draw from the messaging above.

Q. What is distracted driving?

A: Distracted driving is defined as any non-driving activity a person engages in while operating a motor vehicle. Distracted driving activities include conversing with passengers, eating, smoking, manipulating dashboard controls, reaching for something inside the vehicle, and talking or texting on a cell phone. Such activities have the potential to distract the person from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing.

Q: Why is TxDOT focusing on distracted driving?

A: April is **National Distracted Driving Awareness Month** and TxDOT wants to encourage Texans to join the national effort to put away their phones while driving. Our goal is for people to not only put away their phones while driving for the month, but practice this all the time. In Texas, nearly one in four crashes involves driver distraction. Distracted driving is unsafe for drivers and others on the road and can result in traffic crashes and fatalities. Despite these dangers, drivers engage in potentially distracting secondary tasks 30 percent of the time their vehicles are in motion. In Texas, 81,103 crashes involved distraction in a vehicle, driver inattention or cell-phone use in 2011, and 361 of these crashes were fatal.

Q. What are you doing to get the word out about this problem?

A: In order to decrease the incidence of distracted driving, TxDOT will be raising awareness of the dangers associated with driving while distracted. Throughout the month of April (National Distracted Driving Awareness Month) TxDOT will air radio PSAs statewide that remind drivers to put away the phone and drive. The PSAs are intended to educate drivers about the dangers of driving while distracted.

TxDOT will utilize social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to encourage safe driving behavior, post important information, and link to existing on-line driving demonstrations.

TxDOT is also distributing posters and other information to Texas schools and businesses to raise awareness about the dangers of cell phone use behind the wheel.

Additionally, TxDOT will participate in the first Texas Distracted Driving Summit on April 26, 2012, in San Antonio, Texas. The summit is being presented by Texas-based USAA, a leading financial services provider for the military community and their families, in association with TxDOT and Shriners Hospitals for Children. It will bring together federal, state and local officials, law enforcement, traffic safety experts, physicians, businesses and others to increase awareness of the dangers of distracted driving and facilitate education and advocacy efforts that will help change behaviors and make Texas roads safer.

Q: What else can you tell us about the Distracted Driving Summit?

A: We're excited about the first Texas Distracted Driving Summit. More details about the event will be coming soon.

Q: Why are you focusing on cell phone usage?

A: Although there are many activities that cause distraction while driving, cell phone use is one of the most commonly recognized distractions. Cell phone use while driving delays reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol concentration of .08, the legal limit for drunk driving. Drivers who use a hand-held

device are 4 times more likely to get into a crash serious enough to cause injury, and texting drivers are 23 times more likely to get involved in a crash.

Q: Is it safe to use hands-free devices?

A: Research indicates that whether it is a hands-free or hand-held device, the cognitive distraction is significant enough to degrade a driver's performance. The driver is more likely to miss key visual and audio cues needed to avoid a crash. Research indicates that the burden of talking on a cell phone—even if it's hands-free—saps the brain of 39 percent of the energy it would ordinarily devote to safe driving. TxDOT encourages drivers to refrain from using both hand-held and hands-free devices, as both slow a driver's reaction time.

Q: Is talking or texting on a cell phone illegal in Texas?

A: Currently, Texas does not have a statewide law regarding cell phone use, but there are several bills in the Texas legislature regarding wireless communications while driving. There are 34 states that ban text messaging for all drivers, and 10 states that ban motorists from using hand-held phones while driving. Although there are no Texas state laws on cell phone use, many cities have passed their own laws regarding cell phone use.

Q: What cities have distracted driving laws?

A: Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, Amarillo, Galveston, El Paso, Missouri City and Stephenville have enacted local distracted driving laws. Although these cities are the only ones who have laws against distracted driving, all Texans should aim to reduce distractions while driving.

Q: What can individuals do to reduce distracted driving in Texas?

A: First, educate yourself on what activities are considered distractions while driving. TxDOT hopes that by raising awareness, Texans will recognize the secondary tasks they perform in the car and will change their driving behavior to reduce these distractions. Remember to focus your attention on the road and wait until you arrive at your destination to conduct non-driving activities. Along with eliminating distractions in your own vehicle, encourage friends and family members to do the same.

Q. How can I find out more about distracted driving?

A: Visit www.distraction.gov for more information on distracted driving. Additionally, TxDOT will share important information on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/TxDOT> to educate drivers on the dangers associated with distracted driving.

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