



Topic: Texting While driving

Don't do it!. Texting while behind the wheel kills people everyday.



Driving while text messaging or fiddling with an MP3 player is dangerous — even more hazardous than talking on a cell phone, a new study shows.

Researchers at Eastern Virginia Medical School and Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk enlisted 21 teens between the ages of 16 and 18 to take part in a series of simulated driving experiments. Each teen sat in the bucket seat of a simulated car, driving the vehicle through simulated scenery, in rural, then urban settings in 10-minute time blocks.

First they drove through the virtual scenes without distractions of any kind. Then they drove through the same scenes while text messaging, while talking on a cell phone, and finally while operating an MP3 music player. The findings, although not surprising, were frightening.

Except in the time block when the teens weren't distracted by a device requiring finger movement, they steered the virtual vehicles erratically, weaving in and out of lanes and running over virtual people. Their driving was worst when they were texting, probably because texting forces people to look down in addition to moving their fingers.

Mistakes included slowing down dramatically and weaving more than a foot outside their simulated lane. Each of the participants had at least six months of driving experience. Anyone diagnosed with an attention disorder or who had a history of unsafe driving was excluded, as were teens who reported the use of alcohol or excessive amounts of caffeine.

When distracted, the teens did worse in urban driving. But whether driving in a virtual city or on a virtual country road, they did poorest when texting. The study shows distracted drivers changed speeds, mostly slowing down, and also increased "lane position deviation."

Bottom line? You're a hazardous driver to yourself and everybody else.