



**C.A.T. AMERICA USDOT 247969**

## **DRIVE SAFER, TALK LATER:**

### ***The C.A.T. Guide to Cell Phones and Driving***

Distracted driving -- including the use of cell phones -- is a major contributor to automobile crashes. Between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes related to distracted driving occur daily in the United States. In a year, they contribute to as many as one-half of the 6 million U.S. crashes reported annually.

#### **Distraction = More Than Hands and Eyes**

Driver distractions are nothing new. They've been a topic of discussion since windshield wipers were introduced in cars during the early 1900s. Obviously, drivers are distracted when they take their hands off the wheel or their eyes off the road. Equally troubling, they're also distracted when they take their minds off driving — when they're *thinking* about things other than the road in front of them and the vehicles around them. Drivers can be distracted talking on the phone or eating a sandwich in the car.

#### **How do hand-held cell phones factor into the equation?**

Using a cellular phone while driving can increase your chances of being involved in a crash. However, cell phones aren't the only problem. Other distractions, such as looking at outside objects and other people in the vehicle, pose a greater risk of contributing to crashes than cell phone use.

#### **Why are hand-held cell phones at the heart of the debate?**

Hand-held cell phones are readily visible to other drivers. When people chance upon a distracted driver and notice a cell phone, they naturally blame the phone. Most drivers are frustrated when they see inconsiderate, inattentive drivers talking on cell phones.

However, it's more difficult to determine if a distracted driver is talking to a passenger, tuning the radio or eating.

#### **What about hands-free phones?**

Hands-free phones are not risk-free. The hands-free feature is simply a convenience: It does not increase safety.

Studies show that hands-free cellular phones distract drivers the same as hand-held phones. Why? Because it is the *conversation* that distracts the driver — not the device.

#### **What do recent studies show?**

Studies show that intellectual activities distract drivers. Such activities impair their ability to drive safely and retain control of the vehicle.

In one study, drivers were given simple concentration exercises to perform while driving. None required drivers to remove their eyes from the road. However, performing the exercises significantly diminished the drivers' ability to drive. Specific changes in driving behavior included tunnel vision, decreased road scanning and decreased use of rear-view mirrors. Drivers also reduced their speed when performing the exercises.

***The bottom line? Drivers need to keep  
our eyes on the road – and their minds on driving.***

### **Will banning hand-held cell phones improve safety?**

Not according to current research. A study funded by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety about the effect of cell phone use on driver attention found that the distraction of using a hands-free cell phone and tuning a radio is similar. Regarding the question of banning specific devices such as hand-held cell phones, two facts are clear:

Banning *hand-held* phones, but allowing *hands-free* phones is likely to have little or no effect on safety. No studies show hands-free phones offer safety advantages over hand-held phones. The distracting factor is the conversation — not the device itself. And no one can legislate when and what drivers think.

Banning hands-free phones won't address the larger issue. Banning hands-free phones will not affect other distracters in the car, which are equally as distracting as cell phones.

### **What can we do about cell phones and safety?**

- C.A.T. recommends drivers not use their cell phones or satellites while driving.

**SAFE DRIVING REQUIRES YOU TO STAY FOCUSED  
AND KEEP YOUR MIND ON THE ROAD!**

**Andy Yoos – Safety Director**