

How Much is a Text Message Really Worth?

What is a text worth anyways? Can't it wait? Texting while driving is a huge problem with teenagers, and is becoming increasingly dangerous. A recent study shows that 75% of teens surveyed own a cell phone, and that 66% of those admit to texting while driving. Most teenagers have been told that text messaging and driving is dangerous, but how true could it be when their parents do it also? If laws don't enforce the rule of not texting while driving, how dangerous could it really be? Although texting is quick and easy, doing it while driving causes many accidents that were preventable, puts that person and others around them in danger, and is the leading cause of teen death.

Driving and texting causes many accidents that were preventable. The risk of getting into a car accident increases by 50% when sending or receiving messages. It's so dangerous, that it's been proven that a person who is texting is more likely to get into an accident than if driving drunk. A driving test was completed, and the results showed that while texting behind the wheel, the driver's reaction time slowed down by 35%. When driving under the influence of alcohol, the driver's reaction time slowed down only by 12%. This test shows that a person's reaction times are three times slower when texting than that of somebody who is driving drunk. This test also proved that when texting and driving, the control over the vehicle decreased by a whole 91%. Although decreased reaction rates and control of the vehicle when texting and driving weren't the only haunting discoveries, the speed of the vehicle also increased and decreased dramatically. For every 6 seconds while texting, the drivers' eyes are off the road for 4.6 of those seconds. That is enough time to drive the length of a football field at 55 mph and be unaware of it. Thirty-eight percent of people even admit to driving a distance and not remembering it, because they were texting on their cell phone. Texting forces the driver to look down in order to

read and reply to a message, which is why it is so dangerous. Every time a driver on the road is occupied by reading a text message, their concentration is no longer on driving; this makes cell phones a danger to everybody on the road.

The driver is not only endangering him or herself when they text and drive, but they also endanger all other persons around them. Seventeen-year-old Patrick Sims was replying to a text message while driving, when he heard his girlfriend scream. When he looked up he was inches from a cyclist in the bike lane. Patrick struck the biker and killed him in the collision. This accident changed the teen's life forever. "There's no words to say how sorry I am, I think about this car accident every single day of my life," Patrick states. Unfortunately, Patrick's story is very common and accidents like this happen every single day. Patrick now speaks publicly about his accident and says, "I think everybody thinks it can't happen to them, because I thought the same thing. But obviously, it can." He may not have ended his life because of texting, but he ended another innocent person's life. Texting while driving is unfair to others around, when that person chooses to send a text message behind the wheel. An innocent person shouldn't have to be the victim of someone else's mistake. How important can one text be that it has to endanger the lives of every other person on the road? Though, texting when driving may result in the deaths of innocent citizens, it most often takes the life of the person who chose to text and drive.

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of teen death in the United States. Twenty-one percent of those fatal car accidents are caused just because of text messaging. Every year 330,000 people are injured in car accidents from texting and another 2,600 people die. Teens are new on the road and don't have a lot of driving experience yet. They should be looking up to their parents as role models on how to be safe drivers. Though, this solution to texting and driving has one problem; 66% of America's parents admit to texting while driving also. Teens also admit to

observing 50% of their parents speeding and 33% of their parents not wearing a seatbelt. Teens learn and imitate their parents actions, and if what they're watching is a bad example, how can society expect teens to be safe drivers and to not text while they drive? If their parents perform it in front of them, doesn't that make it okay? Not only do most parents set a bad example, but also 52% of teenagers admit that their parents are unlikely to punish them for texting while driving anyways. Texting while driving is a fatal decision, and takes the lives of people every day. If teens had more support from their parents to make wise decisions, then hundreds of lives could be saved every day.

Cell phones may seem like just a toy to most teenagers, but in reality, thousands of people are killed every year just because teens took their eyes off the road for a few seconds to read a text. Many states are encouraging citizens to put down their phones for the short time they're behind the wheel, and many have even made texting when driving illegal. Recently Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, California, and the District of Columbia have banned texting while driving. Thirty-eight other states are currently considering 133 different bills that will regulate text messaging during driving. More people are realizing the dangers of using a cell phone while behind the wheel, and every person should be encouraged to drive safely and to stay off their phone when they're on the road.

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