



National Safety Council

NEWS

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Contact: Amy Williams
Communications Director
(630) 775-2307

Note: Scientific references are available from NSC Media Relations (630) 775-2307 or media@nsc.org.

National Safety Council Estimates that At Least 1.6 Million Crashes are Caused Each Year by Drivers Using Cell Phones and Texting

Washington, DC – The National Safety Council announced today that it estimates at least 28% of all traffic crashes – or at least 1.6 million crashes each year – are caused by drivers using cell phones and texting. NSC estimates that 1.4 million crashes each year are caused by drivers using cell phones and a minimum of 200,000 additional crashes each year are caused by drivers who are texting. The announcement came on the one-year anniversary of NSC's call for a ban on all cell phone use and texting while driving.

"We now know that at least 1.6 million crashes are caused by drivers using cell phones and texting," said Janet Froetscher, president & CEO of the National Safety Council. "We know that cell phone use is a very risky distraction and texting is even higher risk. We now know that cell phone use causes many more crashes than texting. The main reason is that millions more drivers use cell phones than text," she said. "That is why we need to address both texting and cell phone use on our roads."

"This new estimate provides critical data for legislators, business leaders and individuals to evaluate the threat and need for legislation, business policies and personal actions to prevent cell phone use and texting while driving," Froetscher said. "There was great progress made in 2009, particularly regarding a broad recognition that texting is

dangerous. We now need the same broad consensus that recognizes cell phone use while driving causes even more crashes.”

Froetscher said public support for laws banning cell phone use while driving is gaining momentum.

"Public opinion research conducted in 2009 by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and Nationwide Insurance show public support for total bans on cell phones at 43 and 57 percent respectively," Froetscher said. "With public support now around 50 percent, we will continue to educate people about the risks of cell phone use while driving and the value of effectively-enforced laws in changing behavior and reducing crashes.”

In constructing its estimates, NSC used widely-accepted statistical methods and analysis based on data of driver cell phone use from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and from peer-reviewed research that quantifies the risk of using a cell phone and texting while driving. NSC's statistical model and estimates were peer-reviewed by academic researchers in traffic safety and biostatistics.

The estimate of 25% of all crashes -- or 1.4 million crashes -- caused by cell phone use was derived from NHTSA data showing 11% of drivers at any one time are using cell phones and from peer-reviewed research reporting cell phone use increases crash risk by four times. The estimate of an additional minimum 3% of crashes -- or 200,000 crashes -- caused by texting was derived by NHTSA data showing 1% of drivers at any one time are manipulating their device in ways that include texting and from research reporting texting increases crash risk by 8 times. Using the highest risk for texting reported by research of 23 times results in a maximum of 1 million crashes due to texting; still less than the 1.4 million crashes caused by other cell phone use.

The National Safety Council (www.nsc.org) saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

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