Cell phone use behind the wheel is a growing concern. According to CTIA – The Wireless Association, in 1995, cell phone subscriptions covered only 11% of the U.S. population. By 2010, that number grew to 93%. As the number of cell phone users continues to increase, so does the number of drivers distracted by cell phones.

Most people understand the visual and mechanical distractions caused by texting behind the wheel. These are obvious distractions, as they take both the driver’s hands off the wheel and eyes off the road. But did you know:

- 2% of crashes involve texting behind the wheel, but 21% of crashes involve cell phone conversations (both hands-free and handheld).¹
- At any given moment, 0.6% of drivers are visibly manipulating handheld devices while 9% of drivers are talking on cell phones.²

For a white paper on cognitive distraction, visit thebrain.nsc.org.

**On the Road, Off the Phone**

Nearly 1 out of every 4 motor vehicle crashes involve cell phone use.

62% of drivers recognize that talking on a cell phone is a very serious threat to their personal safety.

Yet more than 2 out of every 3 drivers admit to talking on their cell phone in the past month.¹

**Why the disconnect?**

It’s important to understand the three main kinds of distraction:

1. **Visual:** Eyes on road
2. **Mechanical:** Hands on wheel
3. **Cognitive:** Mind on driving

Safe driving is about more than hands on the wheel and eyes on the road – it’s about focusing solely on the task of driving. When drivers engage in two activities that require a great amount of mental focus, **the brain quickly switches between those tasks sequentially**. As a result, the brain suffers from inattention blindness.

As it switches its focus and attention back and forth, the brain loses its ability to process all the eyes see and **only a portion of the information is captured**. In this situation, **drivers look out the windshield, but do not see up to 50% of the driving environment**.² In fact, the brain is so overloaded that not all critical driving cues such as red lights, stop signs and pedestrians are delivered to the brain.
Correcting Common Misconceptions

Talking on a cell phone, putting on makeup, eating fast food, tuning your radio or reading a map are all dangerous activities to do while driving. However, cell phone driving is a visual, mechanical and cognitive distraction. You must consider duration and frequency. While thousands of people use cell phones while driving, and conversations often last for several minutes.

Determining contributing factors for motor vehicle crash data is a challenge because not all police reports capture that data. NSC believes estimates surrounding cell phone crashes are likely conservative.

Passengers are a safety benefit for adult drivers as they act as an extra set of eyes. A passenger in a vehicle is aware of the driving situation and can adjust his or her conversation accordingly. However, the person on the other end of the phone call isn’t present, so he or she cannot adjust the conversation when the driving environment becomes more challenging. Also, a cell phone conversation often carries a certain obligation of immediacy to respond.

What you can do

If you are tempted to use your cell phone when driving:

- Change your voicemail greeting to indicate you are driving and will call back when safely parked
- Put your cell phone in your trunk or glove box
- Turn your cell phone on silent
- If you need to contact someone, pull over to a safe location and put your vehicle in Park

If you are a passenger and the driver wants to use a cell phone:

- Tell the driver you are uncomfortable with his or her cell phone use

If you are talking to someone who is driving:

- Ask the person to call you when he or she is parked in a safe location
- Tell the person you will call back later

Share this with your friends and family and visit distracteddriving.nsc.org for more information.
Keep your mind on the road

On the Road, Off the Phone

nsc.org/nsm
Cuando manejes, no uses el teléfono celular

Mantén tu atención en el camino

nsc.org/nsm
On the Road, Off the Phone

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
4. Drivers talking on their cell phone do not see up to ______% of the driving environment.
5. The brain suffers from ______ blindness when a driver engages in two activities that require a great amount of mental focus.
6. Nearly one in ______ crashes are estimated to involve cell phone use.
8. As it switches its focus and attention back and forth, the ______ loses its ability to process all the eyes see so only a portion of the information is captured.
9. At any given moment, 0.6% of drivers are visibly manipulating handheld devices while 9% of drivers are ______ on phones.
11. If you need to use your cell phone, pull over to a safe location and put your vehicle in ______.
12. Change your ______ greeting to indicate you might be driving and will call back when safely parked.
14. Passengers are a safety ______ for adult drivers as they act as an extra set of eyes.
16. Determining contributing factors for motor vehicle crash data is a challenge because not all ______ reports capture that data.
17. 62% of drivers recognize that talking on cell phones is a very ______ threat to their personal safety.
18. Turning your phone on ______ is a good way to avoid using your cell phone while driving.
19. If you are a passenger and the driver wants to use a cell phone, tell the driver you are ______ with his or her cell phone use.

DOWN
1. Cell phone use while driving is a ______, mechanical and cognitive distraction.
2. Lawmakers and the public seem to understand the visual and mechanical distractions caused by ______ behind the wheel.
3. ______ distractions, such as a phone conversation, often last much longer than visual or manual distractions.
6. 21% of crashes involve cell phone conversations (both hands-______ and handheld).
7. When driving, put your phone in your ______ or glove box.
10. It’s important not to talk on the phone while driving to keep yourself ______.
13. Having your hands off the wheel is otherwise known as ______ distraction.
15. In 1995, cell phone subscriptions covered only ______% of the U.S. population. By 2010, that number grew to 93%.
CROSSWORD PUZZLE KEY

Overexertion

ACROSS
5. weight
7. unintentional
10. proper
11. warm
14. nose
15. muscles
16. position
17. body
18. signs
19. inflammation
20. stretching

DOWN
1. frequent
2. physical
3. twist
4. recover
6. square
8. overexertion
9. large
12. footing
13. ergonomics

Teen Driving

ACROSS
2. safety belts
3. practice
5. drinking
6. parents
9. teen
10. one
11. months
12. three
13. law
14. comprehensive
15. mandatory
16. zero
17. mandatory
18. fifteen
19. shared
20. modeling

DOWN
1. graduated
4. passengers
7. nighttime
8. cell phone
15. earlier

Slips, Trips and Falls

ACROSS
1. vision
3. rungs
7. wheels
8. ladder
9. falls
10. surroundings
12. traffic
13. active
15. tripping
17. distractions
18. excercise
19. unguarded

DOWN
2. spills
4. uneven
5. emergency
6. gates
9. four
11. handrails
14. cords
16. hazards

On the Road, Off the Phone

ACROSS
4. fifty
5. inattention
6. four
8. brain
9. talking
11. park
12. voicemail
14. benefit
16. police
17. serious
18. silent
19. uncomfortable

DOWN
1. visual
2. texting
3. cognitive
6. free
7. trunk
10. safe
13. mechanical
15. eleven