

## Preventing Distracted Driving

In 2014, 3,179 people were killed and 431,000 were injured in car crashes involving distracted drivers (USDOT)<sup>1</sup>. Distracted driving is a major issue, and it needs an effective solution. Public education about this issue is becoming more common, and it does help, but it's not enough. Many people still believe that they can do things like eating and texting while driving, and that there is no danger associated with it. Nobody is invincible, and multitasking has proven to be impossible. Technology is advancing quickly, so a technological solution could solve this issue and save lives.

As cell phone technology advances, ownership is increasing as well. According to State Farm, the percentage of drivers who own a smartphone increased by about 30% from 2011 to 2014 (State Farm)<sup>2</sup>. These phones are the main cause of distraction while driving. Every day, around 660,000 people are reported to use their phones while driving (Snyder)<sup>3</sup>. From checking social media to texting, some people can't resist, and it's a widespread issue. In the United States, 46 states have banned texting while driving for all ages, and 38 states have banned all cell phone use for novice drivers. However, evidence that this has had an effect is unclear. Many people who have crashed as a result of using their phones are reluctant to admit that they had been using them, and there is no way to prove whether they had or hadn't been (McCartt)<sup>4</sup>.

Car manufacturers have begun to implement speech software into cars, which allows drivers to text and make phone calls hands-free. However, this technology poses almost as many dangers to users as handheld devices (Kissel)<sup>5</sup>. Instead of staying focused on driving, they are telling the software what to do. It's the same danger as having a conversation with a passenger (DeGroat)<sup>6</sup>. Drivers are paying attention to them while trying to remain attentive to the road. Even though they are looking at the road, they're not fully focused on what they are doing. Driving needs one-hundred percent of one's attention.

In order to solve this issue, all phone manufacturers should implement a detection system that can sense if it's being used by the driver. If it detects that the driver is accessing it, every app on the phone should be disabled except for the keypad, so the driver can call for services in case of an emergency, and the GPS, which uses speech to direct them where to drive. It also needs to be precise, as passengers should still be able to have access to their own phones. For example, the phones can use the camera to look for things around the driver's seat such as the steering wheel, speedometer, or other dashboard gauges. They could have motion and sound detection, paired with the GPS, so that the phone only disables the apps while the car is in motion. The phones could also read the movements of the user, to determine whether they are driving or not.

Too many people die or are injured by distracted driving. Since the main cause of distraction is smart phones, phone manufacturers would save lives by implementing a system that prevents drivers from using their phones. As technology advances, the measures taken to keep us safe should as well. Cars may be designed to keep us safer, but distractions are still an issue with the increasing popularity of smartphones. Software built into the phones that would greatly reduce driving distractions is in fact possible to create. This is a solution that could make a difference.

<sup>1</sup> "Facts and Statistics." Distracted Driving : Facts And Statistics. U.S. Department of Transportation, n.d. Web. 06 Feb. 2017.

<sup>2</sup> State Farm Insurance. "Drivers Admit to Using Their Phone When Behind the Wheel – Here's When." Multivu. N.p., n.d. 18 November 2014. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.

<sup>3</sup> "Texting and Driving Accident Statistics - Distracted Driving." Edgarsnyder.com. Edgar Snyder & Associates, n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017.

<sup>4</sup> McCartt, Anne T., David G. Kidd, and Eric R. Teoh. "Driver Cellphone and Texting Bans in the United States: Evidence of Effectiveness." *Annals of Advances in Automotive Medicine*. Association for the Advancement of Automotive Medicine, Mar. 2014. Web. 10 Feb. 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Bankrate.com, Chris Kissell •. "6 Causes Of Distracted Driving." 6 Causes Of Distracted Driving | Bankrate.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

<sup>6</sup> DeGroat, Bernie. "Road Chat: Talking to Passengers Can Be as Dangerous as Using a Cell Phone | University of Michigan News." Road Chat: Talking to Passengers Can Be as Dangerous as Using a Cell Phone | University of Michigan News. N.p., n.d. Web. 17 Feb. 2017.