

## Calling from Anywhere

It was Madison's day off, so she decided to take her three year-old-daughter, Alley, for a walk. They went to the park for a while to play on the swings. After that they went to the ice cream shop for a treat. As they were on their way home, a woman ran a stop sign, hitting Madison's little girl. The stroller was ripped from Madison's hands, hurling her little girl into the street leaving her lifeless body in front of her. When the authorities arrived, they came to the conclusion that the woman driving the car had been on the cell phone. She was paying attention to the conversation she was having on the phone instead of her surroundings. As for Madison, her daughter Alley can never be replaced; there will be an empty spot in Madison's heart for the rest of her life. Though this accident is fictional, many similar accidents happen daily on our country's streets and highways. Talking on a cell phone while driving should be illegal because it distracts drivers and causes accidents.

One of the main reasons that cell phones should be illegal while driving is because they distract drivers. According to an article by Mark Eddington of the [Salt Lake Tribune](#), David Powell is just one of the many victims of a cell phone-related car accident. Powell was a paramedic and a police officer before his accident (Eddington par 1). On his day off, he decided to go for a motorcycle ride, not knowing that it would change the rest of his life (Eddington par 15). While traveling Powell was hit head-on by a car that had been rear ended and propelled into his lane (Eddington par 16). This accident was a result of a driver who reached for a phone while he was driving (Eddington par 1). When he was hit, the majority of his right foot was ripped from his body because it got stuck between the car and his motorcycle (Eddington par 18). The next 10 months of his life consisted of many trips to the hospital and "undergoing five amputations" (Eddington par 19). This is just one example of many accidents that happen as a result of drivers using their phones while driving.

While not all users of car cell phones are killed, many cause injuries to themselves or others and negatively impact the economy. An October 2000, [USA Today](#) article stated that more than 200,000 people are injured annually as a result of people not stopping at stop signs, and more than 800 are killed, all because of cell phone use (Moore and Moore par 3). Most of these accidents could have been prevented had the driver been focusing simply on driving. The majority of cell phone calls are made during rush hour traffic, which has a direct effect on the percentage of accidents linked to cell phone usage (Graham et al. par 4). Another study done at the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis predicts that it would save \$43 billion dollars a year in damage to property, medical expenses and others to ban cell phone use in vehicles nationally ("Study says phones may" par 2). The risks to driving while on a cell phone are far reaching. Although there are many people injured as a result of cell phones being used while driving and doing so has proved to have a negative effect on our economy.

Although many people recognize the risks of cell phone use while driving, they would argue that the benefits of having a cell phone in their vehicles outweigh those risks. If cell phones were not allowed in vehicles, many people would die as a result of slowed response time for emergency response teams, according to a Harvard Center for Risk Analysis report (par 5). In a Loyola University Health System publication, the "AAA-Chicago Motor Club and AT&T Provide Wireless Phone Tips," which state that 100,000 calls are received by 911 daily in the U.S.A. (par 4). Some people say they need to have a cell phone to use in an emergency situation. That is not necessarily a bad thing; however, if people do encounter an emergency situation, they should pull off the side of the road to talk. This would decrease the risks for everyone.

Many drivers would argue that they are decreasing the risks of driving while on a cell phone by using hands free units rather than holding the cell phone itself. However, recent studies do not support that belief. The University of Illinois Beckman Institute discovered that the use of hands-free devices isn't always the best choice either ("U. Illinois study" par 2). There have been several tests done to show that the use of a hands free unit makes it more difficult for a driver to drive a car safely. A report done by David L. Strayer and his colleagues from the University of Utah in Salt Lake City states that both types of cell phone users in driving simulation tests had decreased reaction time to signals, had drivers who drove through red lights, and had more collisions as a result of talking on a cell phone (B.B. par 1 and 2). The numbers of collisions were significantly fewer when the radio was on and when drivers had passengers in their vehicles to visit with (B.B. par 1). Though head sets may take away from the use of a driver's hands, they don't stop the diversion of their attention while they drive.

Clearly, cell phones and even hands-free devices should not be allowed while driving. The number of accidents as a result of being distracted by a cell phone makes that a fact. Obviously, cell phones can be a wonderful tool; however, it would be much safer for everyone on the roads if people who were using them would pull over to talk. When we take on the responsibility of driving a vehicle, it is important that we not only think about ourselves, but think about everyone around us as well.

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