

Dangers of Texting and Driving



All of us enjoy the freedom that driving gives. It provides transportation and makes our lives easier. However, it is extremely important for us to teach our children and young drivers safety while driving – especially how to avoid distracted driving. Texting while driving (TWD) has become a monumental problem in our county. According to federal data, between 2001 and 2007 an estimated 16,000 people in the US died in accidents caused by drivers sending text messages. Especially during these winter months, when snow and poor weather are already distracting enough, it can be fatal for a person to be even more distracted by texting while driving a car. Parents who teach their children why TWD is dangerous can help to save lives. Here are some reasons why talking to your teen is so important:

- **Texting While driving is Against the Law in Utah.** A person TWD who causes a crash killing or injuring someone faces up to 15 years in prison.
- **Younger drivers are four times more likely to get in an accident** than older drivers. In 2008 there were over 3,400 teens between the ages of 15-19 who were killed in car crashes in the United States. Because teens are still gaining experience, adding the distraction of texting adds to the risk of getting into a car crash.
- **Parents Have the Most Influence on their Children.** Talking to your teen can help them know your feelings about the issues. You will be able to set rules for their driving behavior and you both will be clear on what is expected. By doing this, you can help to save your teen's life.

AS A PARENT:

- Set the example!
- When you know your teen might be driving, don't just call to visit.
- Before starting the content of a call, ask the teen if she is driving. If she is, tell her to pull over and call her back.
- If you need to talk to your teen, make the call short. Don't have emotional conversations or make critical decisions over the cell phone.

IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Zero Fatalities and the Utah County Health Dept. provide activities and presentations at local schools.
- Get involved in pledges, awareness, education, and advocating for effective legislation

For more information, please visit: <http://www.zerofatalities.com> or contact Carrie Bennett with the UCHD's Injury Prevention Program (801-851-7035).

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