

## **It Only Takes a Second.....**

Answering a quick text, talking on the phone, your pet on your lap, eating your lunch or checking the weather app, these are all examples of how we attempt to multi-task while behind the wheel. The possibility of a collision dramatically increases when a driver loses focus, even if just for a split second. Distractions reduce the ability of a driver to see potential hazards, they delay the time in which a driver reacts in a dangerous situation, and distracted drivers will often swerve into another lane which increases risks for oncoming traffic.

The number of people that continue to drive while distracted is a concern being raised regionally, provincially and nationally. Recent statistics show that distracted driving habits contribute to almost eighty percent (80%) of motor vehicle collisions.

According to Parachute, a National organization focused on injury prevention, teenage drivers are at a higher risk of fatal collisions per kilometer than any other drivers on the road. While only 13% of licensed drivers in Canada are 16 to 24 years old, this same young age group accounts for roughly one-quarter of fatalities and serious injuries on the road. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study found that 71% of teens sent a text while driving and 78% received and read a text while driving.

It is common knowledge that it isn't safe to text and drive, so why do we do it? Technology of today provides the ability to communicate with several people at one time and it occurs almost instantly. The moment a text tone is heard, many feel the need to immediately read and respond. According to Parachute, using a smartphone while driving quadruples the risk of a crash. As parents, peers, and role models, what can we do? It is quite simple: restrict the texting to times when you are not behind the wheel.

Another cause of distraction while driving is pets. As much as you love your pet, it isn't safe for you or your pet to have him/her on your lap while driving. The reason is your vision may become obscured and your ability to handle the steering wheel becomes compromised.

Distraction and driving don't mix. It is impossible to see a child walk across the street in front of your vehicle if you are looking in the rear view mirror applying your lipstick! Even if a vehicle is stopped at a traffic light, the driver still needs to remain aware of the surroundings including other vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

Across Canada, Parachute has dedicated the week of October 19-25 as National Teen Driver Safety Week. Please join in the efforts and do your part. Speak up. Be a role model. Tell your family and friends to put away the phone before getting in the car, minimize all distractions and keep their eyes on the road. With your help, we can help make these preventable injuries a thing of the past.

For more information please visit [www.parachutecanada.org](http://www.parachutecanada.org).

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