
IOWA DISTRACTED DRIVING FACT SHEET

June 2010

- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that over 5,000 fatal crashes each year in the United States, or 1 fatal crash in 6, involves some form of distracted driving.
- Iowa data shows that since 2001, a total of 5,129 motor vehicle crashes involved the use of cellular telephones by one or more operators.
- Those Iowa crashes included 117 crashes involving serious injuries to one or more persons.
- Tragically, 16 persons have been killed in Iowa crashes where cellular telephone use was involved.
- Dr. David Strayer, a noted researcher on the use of electronic devices while driving, characterizes driver performance while talking on a cell phone to be compromised to a degree equivalent to driving while intoxicated.
- Dr. Strayer's research also shows no appreciable improvement in the driving behavior of operators using hands-free cellular telephones.
- Dan McGehee, behavioral safety researcher at the University of Iowa, notes that the use of electronic communication devices is not just a young driver issue. The act of reading and composing e-mail messages while driving includes many people who are middle aged or older.
- Texting while driving has become a particular safety concern. Thus far, 23 states have enacted some type of restriction on texting while driving.
- Iowa enacted legislation restricting the use of electronic devices. The following provisions go into effect July 1, 2010 with only warnings being issued the first year.
 - For any person holding a learner's permit, provisional license or school permit, the use of electronic communication or electronic entertainment devices while driving is prohibited.
 - For all other licensed drivers, the use of hand-held electronic devices to write, send or read a text message is prohibited.
 - Regular license holders can key in a phone number and make cell phone calls or use a GPS unit.
 - All drivers can use electronic communications devices if they are at a complete stop and off the traveled portion of the roadway.

