

# Study: Texting While Driving Dangerous

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With fall classes starting, Texas A&M University students are back on College Station roads, and some will be using cell phones to text while driving.

“Students need to be made aware of the deadly consequences of texting while driving,” said Kristi Hosea, master officer for the Texas A&M University Police crime prevention unit.

Anything that takes a driver’s eyes from the road is dangerous, but according to Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTI), texting has the highest risk of causing a crash.

VTI also found that texting distracts a driver’s eyes off the road for the longest amount of time. Writing a typical text message can distract a driver’s eyes from the road for approximately 4.6 seconds over an interval of six seconds. While driving 55 mph for six seconds, a driver could travel the length of an entire football field without looking at the road.

“Just think of a child in the bathtub, the phone rings and the mother leaves the child unattended to answer the phone instead of letting it just ring,” Hosea said. “The phone conversation takes a few seconds longer than the mother planned, and the kid drowns in the bathtub.

“The same thing happens with text messaging; the driver is not paying attention to the road,” Hosea said. “What happens when someone steps out into the road or the car in front of you has to slam on their brakes?”

U.S. Transportation secretary Ray LaHood will hold a distracted driving summit in late September to raise awareness of the dangers of text messaging and other distractions.

“I plan to announce a list of concrete steps we will take to make drivers think twice about taking their eyes off the road for any reason,” LaHood said.

A recent public service announcement video produced in part by UK police illustrated the potential dangers of texting while driving. Three women are shown talking while driving down a highway. The driver is texting, and crosses into the other lane, colliding with oncoming traffic. The driver lives, but the passengers, as well as two others involved in the accident, are killed. This video has been shown in schools throughout the UK.

Currently, 17 states and the District of Columbia have laws banning texting while driving. The Texas Legislature approved a bill stating that drivers may not use mobile devices while in active school zones. The governor signed it into law June 19 and the law became effective on Sept. 1.

“The law does prohibit the use of all phones in school zones,” said College Station Police Department public information officer Lt. Rodney Sigler.

However, the department will not be enforcing this law until signs are posted in front of school zones, Sigler said.