

Traffic Accidents and Solutions

By Krista-Denise Matsumura

Traffic accidents are so common that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regard the events as a primary concern. In fact, motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death in the United States. This is why prevention is a priority— however, prevention can't be achieved without a thorough understanding of what causes the problem in the first place:

distracted driving (The Most Common Causes of Collision).

Distracted driving is anything that pulls the driver's attention away from the road. This can include actions like eating/drinking, talking to a passenger, or taking a second too long to look at something as one drives by (also known as "rubber-necking"). Unsurprisingly though, the most common source of driver inattention is cell phone use (The Most Common Causes of Collision). Answering calls, making calls, reading messages, and sending messages (in that order) are responsible for the majority of traffic accidents (Zhou). Phone usage is considered a *triple-threat distraction*: it takes the driver's eyes off the road, at least one hand off the wheel, and requires the brain to switch focus from controlling the car to controlling the phone screen. Thus, a driver's ability to operate their vehicle in a safe manner is severely compromised (The Most Common Causes of Collision).

Although a simple answer to this dilemma would be to just "encourage people to not use their phones", I personally feel that this problem requires a creative solution that is more realistic. Let's be honest here, there are already laws in place which prohibit the use of phones while driving. Furthermore, advertisements that serve as warnings for the dangers of doing so are fairly ubiquitous. Unfortunately, the sad truth is that these measures must not be enough if phone usage remains the number one cause of distracted driving. Therefore, the solution must

not be something that *takes away* the function of a phone, but rather something that makes using the phone not distracting. My proposal is that the solution resides in technological advancement and social equality: a government supported initiative that mandates a hands-free calling/messaging device installed in every car.

The reasoning is two-fold. Cars that have the capability to integrate phone usage into their control system allow drivers to engage in phone related actions without ever having to take their eyes off the road or hands off the wheel. However, these cars are typically expensive and aren't feasible for everyone (think Tesla). My proposed initiative would produce an easily installed, user friendly, and affordable device that would allow people to connect their phone to their car and use Bluetooth to control it. The device would be a safety feature that is a necessity rather than a luxury, and if it is government supported it could be easily developed and distributed.

On a personal level, I can encourage my family and peers to join me in not using phones while driving; a good practice is to turn on the "Do Not Disturb" function to counter the temptation of checking a notification. It's a simple step, and it's not much, but it is nonetheless a step toward safe driving and saving lives.

Bibliography

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