



By Jim Fetterman, Member of the Executive Board, and Chairman of the Risk Management Committee for the Council.

WHY BSA DOES NOT WANT YOU TALKING ON YOUR CELL PHONE WHEN DRIVING

There are three main types of distraction

Visual - taking your eyes off the road.

Manual - taking your hands off the wheel.

Cognitive - taking your mind off what you are doing.

Texting and smart phone use is extremely hazardous because it combines all three forms of distraction.

Mobile phone use creates hazards as well. The brain is focused on the phone conversation and not what the driver is seeing. Everyone has seen how the driving habits of a person on the phone are noticeably altered. The person on the phone is driving slower than the traffic flow; they veer into the other lane; missed the upcoming traffic light; or they make last minute driving changes because they were not focused on where they needed to turn, etc.

In-car technologies and hands-free equipment help limit the communication distractions.

They should not be completely relied upon, however; because they still distract the driver's cognitive skills.

Allowing others to use phones at night can also create a hazardous situation for the driver. When passengers use their phones at night, the light from the screens/keypad can also cause a glare in the driver's eye or on the windshield.

In addition to the above, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has identified talking on a cell phone as being extremely hazardous activity, for reasons identified above. In 2010, at least 3,092 people were killed in distraction-affected crashes – accounting

for approximately one in every ten fatalities on the nation's roadways. Meanwhile, among the findings from NHTSA's first nationally-representative telephone survey on driver distraction released earlier this year, more than three-quarters of drivers reported that they are willing to answer calls on all, most, or some trips. Survey respondents acknowledged few driving situations when they would not use the phone or text, and yet reported feeling unsafe when riding in vehicles in which the driver is texting and supported bans on texting and cell phone use. Almost all respondents (about 90% overall) reported that they considered a driver who was sending or reading text messages or e-mails as very unsafe. In West Virginia, the home of our next National Jamboree, use of a hand telephone in the car will become unlawful, that can lead to being pulled over and ticketed, effective July 1, 2013. The state is implementing other parts of that law, effective July 1, 2012. Nationwide 39 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam ban texting behind the wheel. Ten states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam prohibit all hand-held cell phone use while driving. A video, put out by the NHSTA can be downloaded free by going to the following web page:

<http://www.distraction.gov/content/faces/index.html>. ***To learn more about NHTSA's efforts on distracted driving visit:*** <http://www.distraction.gov/>.

There recently was a vehicle accident involving Boy Scouts, in another state, where distracted driving was a suspect. Five people were killed in a head-on collision that happened at 10:15 a.m., Saturday, on a state highway. According to police, the initial investigation into the fatal crash showed the scoutmaster's car, being driven by the scoutmaster, drifted into the northbound lane and hit the motorhome head-on. It is unknown what made the scoutmaster's car enter the opposite lane. All four people, two adults and two teenage boys, in the scoutmaster's car were declared dead at the scene. All were wearing their seat belts. A young toddler in the other vehicle was declared dead at the site of the collision.

All the people in the scoutmaster's care were part of a Boy Scouts of America troop traveling back to another state after spending time at a Boy Scouts of America camp.

So let's do ourselves, Scouting, and the other drivers a favor, and either turn the phones off when we are driving vehicles with Scouts in them, or when driving in the states that permit the phones to be on, have another person answering.