

# DEADLY TEXTING

Katy Students & Parents  
Vow to Get the Word out  
About the Dangers of  
Distracted Driving

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We pledge not to  
**TEXT & DRIVE**



**A**lex Brown was a 17-year-old cheerleader who was set to graduate near the top of her class as she headed off to school one morning. While typing a text message, Brown lost control of her pickup, and it skidded then flipped off the side of the road, killing her. When Brown's parents Jeanne and Johnny Mac learned that texting was the reason for her death, they launched a grass roots campaign to educate students and parents about the dangers of texting. The Texas teen's story has been featured on *Oprah* and *Extreme Home Makeover* and has inspired hundreds of thousands of others to make a pledge to stop texting and driving.

### Texting Confessions

The Browns are not alone. Every day, 18 families get the devastating news that their teen has been killed in a car accident. And most Katy teens don't realize that texting while driving quadruples their chances of an accident. "I have seen people get distracted by texting, singing along with the radio, and having too many friends in the car," shares Cinco Ranch High School student Elisa Hill. She adds, "Act smart on the road, because once you're in the car, you have the lives of everyone else who is on the road in your hands."

Experts say more teens are involved in traffic fatalities in the summer months, with Saturdays being the deadliest day of all. "Often times, drivers may not be aware of the danger they put themselves and everyone else in by texting and driving," shares Katy teen CeCe Hill. "They start to swerve or most slam on their brakes, because they are texting. It makes me nervous and I suggest they wait to text." She adds, "I would tell them to pay attention, because an accident can happen in the blink of any eye."

With texting on the rise, it's even more important than ever to promote safe driving among teens, shares CRHS student Daphne Cervantes. "Some teens blast music and look at their phone trying to act cool," she says. "In after-school traffic, waiting in line to get out, I see some people on their phones. It is uncomfortable, because texting shouldn't risk your life."

### Distractions Come in Many Forms

Lt. Darryl Coleman of the Harris County Sheriff's Office knows firsthand the tragedy of distracted driving. In his 13 years on Harris County roads, he has investigated and reviewed hundreds of accidents, and far too many of them are the result of someone driving distracted.

The distractions commonly associated with distracted driving, such as texting, eating, and putting on makeup are all dangerous, but are only part of a partial list of tangible distractions. "When you are driving down the road but your mind is totally somewhere else, you may not be physically distracted, such as with eating or texting, but you are still distracted," says Lt. Coleman. "We have investigated crashes where the driver of a vehicle was distracted [in this manner] and was not aware of the vehicle in front stopping. Due to the lack of awareness, that driver collided with the stopped vehicle."

Distracted driving is defined by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) as any non-driving activity that a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increases the risk of crashing. There are three types of distraction when you're behind the wheel, including visual where you take your eyes off of the road, manual where you take your hands off of the wheel, and cognitive where you take your mind off the task at hand.

### A Heavy Price to Pay

Although teenagers are not the only ones texting while driving, their lack of driving experience combined with their love of texting puts them at higher risk. Lt. Coleman feels for families of victims of distracted driving, and continues to observe the behavior of distracted drivers on the roads. "In a one-mile commute, you will likely see several motorists using a cell phone, texting, and even reading," he says. "It is also not uncommon to see someone putting makeup on while driving."

Fidgeting with music, putting on makeup, and eating are other dangerous forms of distracted driving



Jasmine signed the pledge not to text and drive





Alex Brown before prom

## TEENS AND PARENTS Take the Pledge

In honor of Alex Brown and countless others that have lost their lives to texting and driving, make a commitment to drive distraction free by taking the pledge at [rememberalexbrownfoundation.org](http://rememberalexbrownfoundation.org).

The Brown family shares photos of Alex's truck to remind other teens of the dangers of texting and driving



## TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT

### Start a Local Chapter

- A peer-to-peer driver safety program with more than 450 chapters at schools across Texas.

- Seeks to make teen drivers more aware of driving risks, such as driving at night, speeding and street racing, talking and texting, low seat belt use, and alcohol use.

- Visit [t-driver.com](http://t-driver.com) to learn more about starting a local chapter.

## Good Beginnings and Better Futures Start Here

### Montessori Classes

Stimulating classes with hands-on developmental learning.  
(18 mos - 5 yrs)

### After School Programs

Transportation to and from school, teacher guided homework, extended care.  
(Pre-K to 9th grade)

### Enrichment & Extracurriculars

**Academics:** Pre-Algebra, Algebra I & II, Geometry, PSAT, SAT & more  
**Arts:** Dance, Piano, Violin, Arts & Crafts  
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Lt Coleman has seen firsthand families mourning the loss of a loved one due to texting while driving or taking their eyes off the road just for even a second. "The first question the families typically ask [after an accident] is, 'Why?'" He notes the burden deputies have as they try to answer the ensuing questions from loved ones as to why an accident happened.

### Staying Safe on the Road

Teens and drivers of all ages can help promote safe driving among their friends and family by putting their phones away while driving and insisting their friends do the same. CRHS student Sarah Greer says it's important to decrease driving distractions because of the number of lives safe driving can save. "Don't text while driving," she says. "I would keep my phone out of reach, and if someone tried

to contact me while I was driving, I would wait until I was fully stopped to contact them back."

It's important for every Katy driver to pay full attention to the road at all times while behind the wheel. It only takes a second of distraction – one second – to change a life forever. Everyone must do their part to stay safe while driving. "I believe more awareness is necessary – not only programs in schools, but also for the public in general," Lt. Coleman shares. "Sometimes, we all just need to be reminded." KM

*BESS BLANCO appreciates the opportunity to bring awareness to this important issue and has worked to diminish distractions while she is driving in Katy.*

# 6000

teens die  
in car crashes  
every year

## 5 Facts About Distracted Driving

1. 80% of all crashes involve some type of distraction.
2. The worst distracted driving offenders are under the age of 20.
3. More than 500,000 people were injured and 6,000 people died in 2008 due to a distracted or inattentive driver.
4. Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves.
5. Using a cell phone, whether hand-held or hands-free, delays the reactions of the driver, similar to one with a .08 blood alcohol level.

*Sources: 1-Virginia Tech 100-car study for NHTSA, 2-NHTSA, 3-NHTSA, 4-Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 5-University of Utah*

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