

Multitasking Moms

Dangerous distractions on the road

You've heard about teens who text while driving, but did you know there's a new distracted driver in town? She's the busy, multitasking mom. Many Katy parents engage in risky distractions that may impact their children's lives and others. Here's what you need to know about the dangers of distractions.

Written by Katrina Katsarelis and Kirsten Cornell

Confessions of a Distracted Driver

Doreen Rodriguez, a Katy mother, has a confession to make. "Everything you could possibly do while driving, I've been guilty of. I text, eat, talk on my phone, play with the radio, and turn around to talk to my daughter," she says. And Rodriguez is not alone. Hundreds of thousands of moms and dads are guilty of multitasking while driving, not realizing the devastating impact this can have on their lives and their children's lives. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, compared to 3,267 in 2010, and the numbers continue to grow. New research presented at a pediatric health seminar showed that almost 90% of drivers engage in at least one technology-based distraction while driving with their children. According to the study, parents do this at least once a month. Rodriguez has now taken the challenge to drive distraction-free.

EYE-OPENING STAT

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Breaking Bad Habits

Many parents, who wouldn't dream of texting and driving, will engage in other forms of distracted driving that can be just as deadly. Handing food to children, driving with pets on their laps, applying makeup, reading navigation systems, and adjusting the radio can all lead to deadly accidents. "School zones are especially important,"

warns Katy police chief Bill Hastings. "Driving distracted could lead to one of the most tragic experiences of your life if you were to injure your child or someone else's."

With many parking lots available on any given road, Hastings advises moms to find a safe area before making or receiving a phone call. "There's nothing so important that you can't find a place to pull over," warns Hastings. "Having been a paramedic for many years, I also advise moms not to give their children snacks that they could possibly choke on while leaning back in their carseat. The sound of a child choking is of course a severe distraction for anyone."

Families Destroyed

When local attorney Will Adams with Adams Law Firm saw so many families' lives destroyed by distracted driving, he decided to become a spokesperson for End Distracted Driving. The national organization was started by a grieving father whose daughter was killed by a distracted driver in 2009. "Considering my daily experience with cases involving distracted driving - cases involving tragic loss of life or life-altering injuries - it was only natural for me to gravitate toward a goal to end distracted driving," says Adams. "Drivers should never needlessly endanger other drivers," says Adams, who has seen an increase in the number of accidents involving distracted driving over the last decade. "When people hear stories of the families destroyed by distracted driving, it becomes very real to them," adds Adams.

Reformed Distracted Moms

Bonnie Cerny admits she was a hardcore distracted driver before seeing Adams' presentation at a Katy Chamber of Commerce meeting. The presentation made such an impact, Cerny committed to ending her cell phone use while on the road. "If my phone rings, I just don't answer it," says Cerny. "I can easily delay a phone call or let a text go unanswered if it means protecting my kids in the car." **KM**



DISTRACTED DRIVING QUICK QUIZ

Check all of the ones
you've done while driving
with your children

- Put on lipstick or makeup
- Eaten something
- Texted or tweeted
- Passed food to your child
- Looked at your iPad
- Handed a toy to your child
- Reached in the back seat
- Picked up something off the floor
- Read a school paper or flyer
- Looked at your navigation system
- Plugged in your phone
- Fiddled with your MP3 player
- Taken cell phone pictures

If you answered yes to any of these, you are putting yourself, your children, and other drivers in danger.

Fatalities Are Growing

2011 - 3,331 deaths
2010 - 3,267 deaths

Don't Be a Statistic

Source: Texas Department of Transportation

EDITOR'S NOTE: We realize dads, grandparents, and other family members drive distracted too, but we chose to focus mainly on moms for this piece because they are frequently the family's main driver.

Texans behind the wheel: Driving distracted

10% of all drivers are
using their cell
phone right now



90,378
crashes in 2012 involved driver
distraction
(including cell phone use)

NEARLY **1 in 4** crashes involves
driver distraction

Texting takes a driver's eyes
4.6 seconds off the road for
like driving a football field with eyes closed

TALKTEXTCRASH

Source: Texas Department of Transportation

COMMIT WITH US

Our team has made a commitment
to practice distraction-free driving.
If you would like to join us, email
editor@katymagazine.com or
tweet us #KMDistractionFree

