

Talking Points – Q & A

Q: How many cellular phones are there out there?

A: In 1996, there were 34 million cellular phones in America. By 2006 that number had grown to 203 million. *Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, March 16, 2006.*

"Currently, there are 254 million wireless subscribers in the United States - 84% of the U.S. population." (*CTIA-The Wireless Association*)

Q: What is texting?

A: Text Messaging, also called SMS (Short Message Service, allows short text messages to be sent and received on a mobile phone or personal digital assistant. Messages can be sent from one phone to another by addressing the message to the recipient's phone number. (*Source: Wikipedia*)

Q: How is a text sent?

A: Certain mobile devices such as Blackberries, Treos and other PDAs have a qwerty keyboard that a person uses both thumbs to type out messages. Cellular phones use an alpha-numeric keyboard and users likewise use both thumbs to type text. In both cases, the user must either look directly at, or glance often, at the view screen to ensure that the message has been correctly entered before sending.
(*Source: The Text Free Driving Organization*)

Q: Who is texting?

A: According to data gathered by the Pew Internet and American Life Project in 2004, 45% of the teens in America owned a cell phone and 33% used their phone to send a text message.

Two years later, in 2006, according to an article in the Chicago Sun Times, 33% of all American cell phone owners used text messages. The number of texters between ages 18 and 29 had grown to 66%.

In 2006, 158 billion text messages were sent in the U.S. In fact, in the U.S., approximately 300,000 text messages are sent every minute.

By 2007, 66% of all Americans with cell phones admitted to reading text message while driving and 57% admitted to sending text from behind the wheel.

Source: The Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2005, Chicago Sun Time, April 4, 2006, Harris Interactive, August 7, 2007.

Q: Is there any evidence that dwt (driving while texting) is dangerous?

A: The obvious answer is, of course. Common sense tells us that driving a car while looking down at a 2 inch view screen while holding a device and entering text with both thumbs

is dangerous. Because texting is a relatively new phenomenon, official statistics are just beginning to be compiled. Nonetheless, articles from across the country are being written every day about injuries and deaths caused by dwt. For a listing, please go to our *newsroom* for links.

Q: How many people think that dwt is dangerous?

A: According to a survey by Harris Interactive, in 2007, 89% of Americans believe that dwt is distracting, dangerous and should be outlawed.

Source: Harris Interactive Poll, August 7, 2007

Q: Does the proposed law (in Florida) make cell phone while operating an automobile use illegal?

A: It does not. Of course, cell phones are a distraction and distracted drivers are more likely to be involved in an accident. We believe that cell phones should not be used while driving. If you must use a cell phone while driving, please utilize a hands-free device and keep your eyes on the road. Our law makes it illegal to text while driving.

Q: What about the navigation system that is mounted in my car?

A: The proposed law makes an exception for in car navigation devices.

Q: Is this law a primary or secondary law and what is the difference?

A: A primary law means that the law enforcement officer can pull over the car if the officer sees the driver texting. A secondary law means that the officer can cite a texter only if there is some other reason to pull the driver over.

Our organization believes any dwt law must be a primary offense. Florida already has a law making it illegal for a car to have a television installed that is in view of the driver. (F.S. § 316.303). That law is a primary law. Texting is even worse than watching t.v. Texting requires constant interaction with the view screen and keypad. DWT should be a primary law.

Q: What can I do?

A: Make your voice heard. Write your state representative and senator. Tell them that you want them to make our roadways safer. Tell that you don't think it is fair that texters are endangering your life and the lives of your family members. Go to our link and e-mail these public officials. Use your e-mail lists to get the word out. To pass this law we all must raise our voices! Let's start today!