

# The Great Multitasking Lie



## DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF CELL PHONE DISTRACTED DRIVING

Most people may know that texting while driving is a dangerous behavior, but many don't fully grasp the idea that having cell phone conversations in the car is also risky. Below, the National Safety Council helps dispel the illusion of multitasking and the myths that blind the public into believing it is safe to use your cell phone while driving.



### Consider This

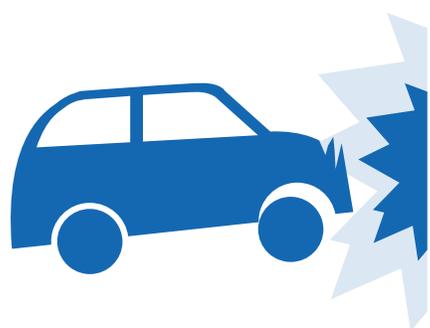


**It's no mystery:** Americans today have an unhealthy obsession with their cell phones.



A 2012 survey conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that **more than two in three** drivers report talking on their cell phone while driving at least once in the past 30 days.

Nearly **one in three** say they did this "fairly often" or "regularly."



Drivers talking on handheld or hands-free cell phones are

**4X**

as likely to be involved in a car crash.



In addition, the National Safety Council currently estimates that people talking on cell phones while driving are involved in **21%\*** of all traffic crashes in the United States.

The average cost of a property damage crash in 2011:

**\$9,100**

\*According to a 2010 annual estimate.

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### Myth vs. Reality

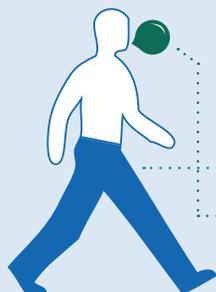


#### Myth #1 Drivers can multitask.

##### Reality

Contrary to popular belief, the human brain cannot multitask. Driving and talking on a cell phone are two thinking tasks that involve many areas of the brain. Instead of processing both simultaneously, the brain rapidly switches between two cognitive activities.

Take the classic example of the act of walking and chewing gum. There is a common misconception that because people appear to simultaneously do both that they can just as easily talk on their cell phones and drive safely at the same time.



The truth is that walking and chewing gum involve a **thinking** task and a **non-thinking** task.

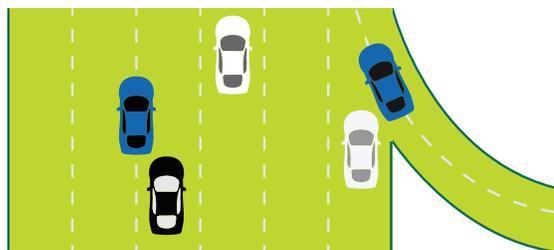


Conversation and driving are **both thinking** tasks.

#### Myth #2 Talking to someone on a cell phone is no different than talking to someone in the car.

##### Reality

A 2008 study cited by the University of Utah found that drivers distracted by cell phones are **more oblivious** to changing traffic conditions because they are the only ones in the conversation who are aware of the road.



In contrast, drivers with adult passengers in their cars have an **extra set of eyes and ears** to help keep the drivers alert of oncoming traffic problems. Adult passengers also tend to adjust their talking when traffic is challenging. People on the other end of a driver's cell phone cannot do that.

#### Sources:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration | University Of Utah | The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety | National Safety Council

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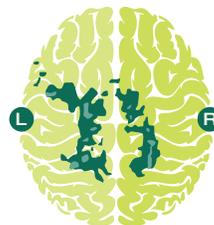
**Myth #3** Hands-free devices eliminate the danger of cell phone use during driving.

#### Reality

Whether handheld or hands-free, cell phone conversations while driving are risky because the distraction to the brain remains.

Activity in the parietal lobe, the area of the brain that processes movement of visual images and is important for safe driving, decreases by as much as **37%** when listening to language, according to a study by Carnegie Mellon University.

Driving alone



Driving with sentence listening



Drivers talking on cell phones can miss seeing up to 50% of their driving environments, including pedestrians and red lights. They look but they don't see. This phenomenon is also known as **"inattention blindness."**

**Myth #4** Drivers talking on cell phones still have a quicker reaction time than those who are driving under the influence.

#### Reality

A controlled driving simulator study conducted by the University of Utah found that drivers using cell phones had **slower reaction times** than drivers with a .08 blood alcohol content, the legal intoxication limit.



There is a simple solution – drivers talking on cell phones can immediately eliminate their risk by **hanging up the phone**, while drunk drivers remain at risk until they sober up.