

Police warn driving while distracted is very dangerous

From the desk of Inspector Tim Melanson

Distracted driving is cited as a causal factor in 30 to 50 per cent of traffic collisions in Ontario, but is probably much higher due to under-reporting.

Distracted driving is a form of impaired driving, as the driver's judgement is compromised when they are not fully focused on the road. A study has found that taking your eyes off the road for two or more seconds increases your risk of being in a collision by about double.

Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to cause injury. Even when drivers use a hands-free phone, they are less aware of the traffic around them. They tend to react more slowly to a critical event or worse, they may not detect the danger at all.

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), it has been recently reported that nearly 50 per cent of Grade 12 students in Ontario report texting while driving.

The 2013 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) Mental Health and Well-Being Report stated that more than one-third of licensed Ontario students in Grades 10 to 12, which accounts for an estimated 108,000 adolescent drivers, report texting while driving at least once in the past year. This amounts to 46 per cent of licenced students in Grade 12 reporting this behaviour. These alarming statistics need to be a topic of discussion in our homes. Talk to your family and check out interesting websites listed below. They contain a wealth of information on distracted driving. As parents, we can start by setting the example to our youth by not texting or using our cellular phones. We are our children's role models and as parents we need to teach them core driving behaviours that will ensure their safety.

Distracted driving has resulted in fatal consequences. Cellphone use is one of the major causes of distracted driving related collisions and fatalities.

One of the suggested strategies to reduce distracted driving is to put your cell phone away. Cell phones should be out of reach. One method in reducing the temptation is by keeping it out of sight, like in the trunk or in a bag, and turning the ringer off.

By using a cell phone or device capable of texting while driving can result in a fine of \$280 under Section 78.1 of the Highway Traffic Act of Ontario.

For more valuable information, check out the following websites:

- ? Ontario Provincial Police ? opp.ca
- ? Centre for Addiction and Mental Health ? www.camh.ca
- ? The Insurance Bureau of Canada ? www.ibc.ca
- ? Ministry of Transportation ? www.mto.gov.on.ca
- ? Leave the Phone Alone ? www.leavethephonealone.ca
- ? Young Drivers of Canada ? www.yd.com