

# 1 Drive Now, Talk Later

## “Cell Phones Cause Deadly Distractions”

That’s a scary statement but recent reports and studies appear to have come to that conclusion.

The University of Utah “...corroborates earlier research studies indicating that both hand-held and hands-free models pose a similar risk of distraction and accident potential.” They further stated that “...even casual conversation while driving and using a cell phone create a visual blindness or ‘inattention blindness’ which decreases a driver’s attention to visual cues and situational awareness. This, in turn, affects the driver’s ability to process traffic cues and make sound driving judgements.”

The *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*(NHTSA), “...estimates that driver distraction is a factor in at least 26% (up to 30%) of traffic fatalities...”. The *Network of Employers for Traffic Safety*(NETS) has indicated that approximately 50% of all crashes are caused by distracted drivers. This three year research study of Oklahoma crash data associated cell phone use to a nine-fold increase in fatalities.

The 1996 study by the *Accident Analysis and Prevention Journal* showed that “...risk of collision increases by 34% among drivers with cell phones. Drivers using their phones more than 50 minutes a month increased their risk of collision five-fold.”

The *New England Journal of Medicine* found that the risk of having an accident while driving and using a cell phone was four times greater than it is when not using a cell phone. There was no statistically significant difference in the risk between a “hand-held” and a “hands-free” phone while driving

There are at least 20 more research studies all coming to the same conclusion. The use of the cell phone, while the vehicle is in motion, significantly increases the chances that the driver will be involved in an accident.

**LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS:** Several court cases have resulted in high dollar awards including one in Arkansas where a lumber wholesaler agreed to pay \$16.2 million to a woman who was severely disabled by one of its salesmen who was talking on his cell phone at the time of the accident. Phone records were subpoenaed for the trial.

Do we need further proof? I don’t think so. Probably everyone of us has had at least one near miss with somebody holding a cell phone up to his/her ear.

**Precautions we can take:** Be extra careful when you see other drivers using cell phones. Ask people who are likely to call you to not call when they know you will be driving. If you must talk, limit your conversation. Tell callers that you are driving and ask if you may call them back.

Any time we think we can save by continuing to drive while using a cell phone is not worth the risk. Let’s all make it a point to ---- **Drive Now, Talk Later!**