

## A Thing of the Past

It is a beautiful sunny day, the windows are down, and the music is up. A perfect day for a drive. A favorite song on the radio brightens your mood even more as you begin to sing along. Cars are whizzing all around, but that doesn't faze you. You are an experienced driver after all. Occasional glimpses down are followed by small corrections of the wheel, but no harm no foul. As a teenager out on the open road, nothing can stop you. With a green light up ahead, you continue to cruise towards it with just another quick downward glance.

Suddenly, a red light replaces the green and the empty intersection is no longer empty. Your perfect day is now replaced with the ferocious impact of a two ton car slamming into your door. You hear the sickening *crunch* and *snap* as metal around you contorts to unrecognizable shapes. The tires shriek against their will across the hot pavement. The music on the radio slowly dies away and wind no longer whips through the windows. Panic begins to set in as your mind quickly catches up to what is happening. And just as your eyes begin to shut, you hear a familiar beep as your phone lights up beside you.

Message Sent.

Stories like this are becoming all too familiar among teenagers today. Texting and driving is one of the leading causes of adolescent injuries and deaths. In 2011 alone, 3,311 people were killed in accidents involving distracted driving ("Distracted"). An issue that is so easily avoidable has resulted in over 3,000 freshly engraved tombstones, countless families torn apart in mourning, and futures ended before they even really began. Lives are being traded everyday for an "important" text.

With the impact this trend is leaving on our country, efforts have been made to stop the growing problem. Cony High School has even invested in huge banners with the warning, “ONE TEXT OR CALL COULD WRECK IT ALL”. Though this is powerful upon the first read, it isn’t enough to change a student’s mentality behind the wheel. Most teens begin with only a few texts here and there and since nothing drastic happens, they begin thinking that nothing ever will. Unfortunately, the more they do it the easier it becomes. After a while, teens are so fluent at texting that they no longer see it as a distraction. To them, it’s as normal as changing the radio station or holding a conversation in the car. Yes we’ve been told countless times not to text and drive, but since when are teenagers doing what they’re told? Regardless of watching the news and hearing stories, it still doesn’t sink in that it could happen to us.

Cell phones have become more than a communication device. They are an obsession. Though it sounds ridiculous, I even know of people who bring their phone into the shower in plastic baggies because they can’t stand the possibility of missing something. If that doesn’t scream obsession, I don’t know what does. Since a five minute rinse can’t tear teenagers’ attention from phones these days, it isn’t surprising that the road doesn’t either. This is an extremity that has unfortunately become reality.

Though texting is more often seen as a problem regarding teenagers, it is becoming obvious that adults don’t know much better. My sister recently got in an accident when she was stopped, waiting to turn. The driver behind her wasn’t paying attention and crashed into the back of my sister’s vehicle at full speed, totaling both cars. As it turned out, the lady was texting at the time and hadn’t noticed her brake lights. Based on that event, it is clear the problem is this: teenagers aren’t going to magically stop making these kinds of poor choices simply because they

hit adulthood. If they text and drive in their teens, they will continue in their twenties, and so on. If we don't take action now, it will become an endless and devastating cycle.

The state of Maine has already succeeded in establishing a law which bans texting and driving. Though this is a step in the right direction, it hasn't been enough to stop it all together. I propose that we devise a system which doesn't give teenagers the deadly temptation of texting while driving. My idea is to create a device in all vehicles that will disable the texting feature. This must be built into new cars and installed in all older ones. Each unit will emit some sort of Wi-Fi that blocks the messages within a certain range. Phone calls can still be made but texts cannot be sent or received until the car is in park. This will eliminate the urge to jump into the never ending conversations among friends. With this system in place, texting and driving will soon be nothing but a distant memory...

It is bright and shining morning in the year 2040. I sit down at my kitchen table with a cup of steaming coffee as I read the daily paper. I briefly scan the police reports for recent accidents; a smile touches my face when I don't find what I'm looking for. My two teenage children are scurrying about me, trying to gather their belongings before school. We share a quick breakfast and then too soon they are off. They head for the door as we exchange goodbyes and just before it shuts, I quickly yell "remember, no texting and driving!" I then laugh quietly to myself, knowing that this concept is completely foreign to them.

Success.

## Work Cited

"Distracted Driving." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14 Mar. 2013. Web. 26 Mar. 2013.