

# Study shows texting while driving can be deadly

May 4 2009

---

A new study confirms what most people already know: sending text messages and driving are a potentially lethal combination.

Twenty-one [teens](#) using a driving simulator while sending text messages or searching their MP3s slowed down, wove in and out of their lanes, and, in some cases, ran over pedestrians, according to a study presented to the Pediatric Academic Societies on Saturday, May 2.

While the most significant finding was that the distracted teens wove and changed their driving speed dramatically (other teens ran over pedestrians as well at a slightly lower rate), those behaviors can clearly pose a danger both to the drivers and others around them.

"It's good for us to increase community awareness that this can be a problem," said LaPrecious Harrold, M.D., a resident physician at Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) and Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (CHKD) in Norfolk, Va.

This study comes as legislators nationwide debate how and whether to regulate texting-while-driving.

The study restricted itself to teens, a population of drivers already at significantly risk. Motor [vehicle accidents](#) are leading cause of death for people between 16 and 20, accounting for more than 5,000 deaths each year, according to the CDC. And teens are four times more likely than older drivers to be involved in a crash.

The study included 21 subjects between 16 and 18 years of age with at least six months driving experience. Anyone diagnosed with an attention disorder or with history of unsafe driving was excluded, as were teens who reported use of alcohol or excessive amounts of caffeine.

Each driver completed four separate 10-minute driving blocks: Undistracted, talking on a cell phone, text messaging and using an MP3 player. Each 10-minute block was separated into two separate [driving](#) scenarios, rural and urban.

The results for the teens sending text messages or fiddling with their MP3 players showed increased "lane position deviation" and speed changes, mostly slowing down.

"What this study demonstrates is that not only does your speed go up and down, you're swinging wide left and right," said Donald Lewis, M.D., vice president of academic affairs at CHKD and chairman of the EVMS Department of Pediatrics. "You're a hazardous driver, to yourself and everybody else."

Source: Eastern Virginia Medical School

Citation: Study shows texting while driving can be deadly (2009, May 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-05-texting-deadly.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.