



U.S. driver survey: texting while driving should be banned; voice technology seen as safer

- A national survey released today showed 86 percent of licensed U.S. drivers described handheld texting while driving as “very dangerous,” with 93 percent supporting a nationwide ban on texting
- Despite strong support for a nationwide handheld texting ban, only 42 percent of respondents believe drivers would stop texting if banned. More than 75 percent believe there would be more compliance if hands-free or voice-activated technologies were widely available
- Sixty-seven percent of drivers said they believed voice-activated technology is a safe alternative to handheld texting
- The most recent and most complete research shows that distractions that take drivers’ eyes away from the road for an extended period of time are a factor in nearly 80 percent of accidents

DEARBORN, Mich., Sept. 25, 2009 – The vast majority of U.S. drivers believes handheld texting while driving is very dangerous and should be banned nationwide, according to a new national survey released today.

The survey showed that 86 percent of U.S. drivers believe handheld texting while driving is “very dangerous” and 93 percent support a nationwide ban on texting. At the same time, only 42 percent of respondents believe drivers would stop texting behind the wheel if the practice was banned. However, more than 75 percent believe there would be more compliance if hands-free or voice-activated technologies were widely available.

The online survey was conducted September 18-21 by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates on behalf of the Ford Motor Company. Ford commissioned the survey as part of its efforts to understand driver perceptions related to distracted driving. Ford last week endorsed a proposed nationwide ban on handheld texting introduced by Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY).

“Research shows that activity that draws drivers’ eyes away from the road for an extended period while driving, such as text messaging, substantially increases the risk of accidents,” said Jim Vondale, director of Ford’s Automotive Safety Office. “That is why we support a nationwide ban on handheld texting while driving and why Ford has developed hands-free and voice-activated technologies to allow drivers to remain connected, but to do so while keeping their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road.”

The survey shows that 67 percent of drivers said they believed voice-activated technology is a safe alternative to texting, and 76 percent said such a feature would be an appealing feature in a car.

The survey results come as the U.S. Department of Transportation is scheduled to host a summit on driver distraction in Washington, D.C., next week.

According to the survey, there is confusion among drivers over existing state laws prohibiting handheld cell phone use and/or texting while driving. Currently 18 states have enacted such bans

but nearly 40 percent of drivers in these states indicated they were unaware of the ban in their own state.

Research on driving solutions

According to a NHTSA-sponsored 100-car study conducted by Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, driver inattention that may involve looking away from the road for more than a few seconds is a factor in nearly 80 percent of accidents.

“A growing number of drivers are using handheld wireless communications and music-playing devices while driving,” said Dr. Louis Tijerina, Ford senior technical specialist. “Research clearly shows that manual operation of those devices that takes the driver’s eyes from the road for an extended period of time creates the kind of distraction that causes accidents.”

Ford developed the Virtual Test Track Experiment (VIRTTEX), a state-of-the-art simulator that monitors and analyzes a variety of driving behaviors. Since VIRTTEX opened in 2001, Ford has completed a number of driver distraction studies that have contributed to the development of Ford’s Driving Skills for Life teen driving education program, the MyKey™ programmable teen-safety feature and SYNC® hands-free communication technology.

“Our studies show that teens are much more willing to take risks while driving, such as manually dialing on a mobile phone in situations that demand greater attention,” said Jeff Greenberg, senior technical leader, Ford Research & Advanced Engineering.

For More Information:

[Ford’s Statement on Driver Distraction Legislation](#)
[Reducing Driving Distraction Fact Sheet](#)

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Survey Methodology

Penn, Schoen & Berland fielded an online poll on behalf of Ford Motor Company from September 18-21, 2009, interviewing a nationwide sample of 1,000 licensed U.S. adults drivers aged 18 years and older.

About Ford Motor Company

Ford Motor Company, a global automotive industry leader based in Dearborn, Mich., manufactures or distributes automobiles across six continents. With about 201,000 employees and about 90 plants worldwide, the company’s automotive brands include Ford, Lincoln, Mercury and Volvo. The company provides financial services through Ford Motor Credit Company. For more information regarding Ford’s products, please visit www.ford.com.

About Penn Schoen and Berland Associates

Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, a unit of the WPP group, is a global research-based consultancy that specializes in messaging and communications strategy for blue-chip political, corporate and entertainment clients. PSB executes polling and message testing services for Fortune 100 corporations and has helped elect more than 30 presidents and prime ministers around the world. More information is available at www.psbresearch.com.