



On October 19, 2008, Bastrop County, Texas, an 18-year-old girl plowed directly into the rear of another vehicle. She was going 70 mph. She apparently never even saw them because she was texting and not paying attention to the road.

As most of you know, SB28 – *No Texting While Driving Law* went into effect January 1, 2009 in the State of California. As one Granite Bay mother, Vikki Fiorenza, so eloquently put it, “[The] text law is probably good thing for teens as I think they tend to overestimate driving abilities and any less distraction is a good thing.” Sergeant John Weaver of the Placer County Sheriff’s office agrees. “I think with time, and many citations, cell phone use and texting while driving will decrease and the roads will become safer. I have no tolerance when it comes to [texting while] driving...A one-ton car traveling at 25 mph will seriously hurt or kill anyone hit by it.” Alexandria Enneking, of Granite Bay, agrees that this new California law is a good thing. “I am definitely in favor of all the new restrictions that limit teens to just driving the car”. Roseville mom, Celena Donahue, also believes this law will benefit young drivers, who “are so new to the road and driving conditions and are easily distracted.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), driver inattention is the primary cause of auto accidents. As stated in their press release of April 20, 2006: “Nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event... Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use, and drowsiness.” A Google search on ‘texting and driving’ yields a plethora of stories and studies. I came across a very interesting acronym used to describe the “crime”: DWT or “driving while tex-

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ting”. Another recent story out of Texas came through informal emails circulated via the Department of Transportation Safety officials. *Driving while “inTEXTicated”* was the phrase used to describe a tragic auto crash that nearly killed a 2-year-old boy in October 2008 (Texas) when his parent’s car - stopped in traffic on the highway - was plowed into by a teenager driving 70mph. She didn’t swerve. She didn’t even hit the brakes.

Texting is a very seductive activity. Texting feels like a minor distraction that compounds over time; we may feel compelled to see who is texting or the reply – and we can become caught up in a relentless series of distractions from class, work at hand, and conversations, consuming larger chunks of time. There is no question about it. Texting while behind the wheel can be lethal. All it takes is a few seconds for a driver to be surprised by a change in the road condition as what happened in the case of the Texas teen, when speed of traffic came to a halt in the blink of an eye with
n o t i m e t o r e s p o n d .

Driving is serious business. Granite Bay dad, John Kenny, believes that the texting while driving ban sends a strong message: “Thou shalt NOT risk thine own life nor the life of thy neighbor for the sake of an almost certainly frivolous text message!” One of my college professors once said, “Wherever you are, be there.” This is great advice for “driving while paying attention” or DWPA. Do you DWPA? After viewing the photos of the child nearly killed in the Texas accident, I am asking myself this question daily.



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