

VERBAL TESTIMONY SENATE BILL 9

Chair Prozanski, members of the committee, for the record my name is Timothy Plummer and I am a Senior Trooper for the Oregon State Police. With me is Lt. Steve Mitchell, the Oregon State University campus station commander.

The Department of Oregon State Police has a primary responsibility for enhancing public safety through highway traffic enforcement and public education. We do this by enforcing state laws on all of Oregon's state and interstate transportation systems.

A trend that we have identified and observed over the last several years is the increase in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted driving and the use of mobile communication devices while driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Administration, injuries and deaths associated with distracted driving is on the rise annually. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver compared to 3,267 in 2010.¹

Oregon is no exception to these statistics. The Oregon Department of Transportation reported that there were 2 fatalities involving the use of a cell phone in 2011, 3 fatalities in 2010, and 4 fatalities in 2009. There were also 276 reported crashes involving a driver who was using a cell phone in 2011, 159 in 2010 and 238 in 2009.²

The National Safety Council estimates that 24% of all motor vehicle crashes involve cell phone use.³

It has been estimated that drivers who use hand-held devices are 4 times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves.⁴

The issue of drivers using their cell phones is a national concern. Findings from research conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, state that one function of the cell phone, text messaging, creates a crash risk 23 times worse than driving while not distracted. They determined that sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, it is like driving the length of an entire football field blind.⁵

This statistic was backed up by the Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging. Through MRI scans, their Department of Psychology Research Report determined that driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37%.⁶

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) www.nhtsa.gov
2. Oregon Department of Transportation – Crash Analysis and Reporting Unit
3. National Safety Council ,State of the Nation of cell phone distracted driving 2012
4. Monash University Accident Research Center "The effects of text messaging on young novice driver performance 2006
5. U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration "Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operation Sept. 2009
6. Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging, Department of Psychology, Research Report "a decrease in brain activation associated with driving when listening to someone speak" Dec. 2007
7. CTIA-The Wireless Association® <http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/research/index.cfm/aid/10323>
8. PewResearchCenter, Teens and Distracted Driving Nov. 2009 <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Teens-and-Distracted-Driving.aspx>
9. Office of the State Court Administrator

To understand the volume of wireless information sent using electronic devices, the Wireless Association reported that in the month of June 2011, more than 196 billion text messages were sent or received in the US, up nearly 50% from June of 2009.⁷

To determine the severity of this problem, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey of American teens. Approximately 40% of teens say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put people in danger.⁸

We have all seen distracted drivers and individuals using their cell phones or texting while travelling down the roadway. The Oregon State Police takes this issue very seriously. Since the enactment of Oregon Revised Statue 811.507, approximately 14,165 citations have been filed through the circuit courts of Oregon by law enforcement officers for the offense of operating a motor vehicle while using a mobile communication device.⁹

The current fine for this violation is \$110.00.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) www.nhtsa.gov
2. Oregon Department of Transportation – Crash Analysis and Reporting Unit
3. National Safety Council ,State of the Nation of cell phone distracted driving 2012
4. Monash University Accident Research Center “The effects of text messaging on young novice driver performance 2006
5. U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration “Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operation Sept. 2009
6. Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging, Department of Psychology, Research Report “a decrease in brain activation associated with driving when listening to someone speak” Dec. 2007
7. CTIA-The Wireless Association® <http://www.ctia.org/advocacy/research/index.cfm/aid/10323>
8. PewResearchCenter, Teens and Distracted Driving Nov. 2009 <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Teens-and-Distracted-Driving.aspx>
9. Office of the State Court Administrator