

NEW DRIVERS

THE DANGERS OF TEXT MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING

KELLY MANNING: Welcome to DMV Infocast, an audio production of the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. This is Kelly Manning, Infocast Editor.

Everyone knows by now that talking on your cell phone without a hands-free device while driving in Connecticut is against the law. For teenagers under 18, talking on your cell phone isn't even allowed with a hands-free device. But drivers should also be aware that checking the internet on your cell phone, text messaging and picture messaging is also illegal in the state.

Today we are here with **Kelly O'Connell** of the Wethersfield Branch Office to talk about the dangers of these activities while driving.

KELLY MANNING: Kelly, do you think a person could safely send a text message while driving?

KELLY O'CONNELL: I can honestly say that you cannot safely send a text message while driving.

KELLY MANNING: Can you explain to young people why it is so dangerous to text message while they are driving?

KELLY O'CONNELL: It is very dangerous to text message while driving only because your eyes are off the road and you are not concentrating on the surroundings around you.

KELLY MANNING: Nowadays, some kids are as good at text messaging as they are at typing on a computer, and they don't even need to take their eyes off the road. Is it safe to text message while driving if you're really good at it?

KELLY O'CONNELL: No, no matter how good you are at typing, sending a text message, you are still, again, taking your eyes off the road, checking to see if you're sending a message correctly, and obviously somebody will respond to your text message, which involves you reading that response.

KELLY MANNING: Our young men listening might not be interested in text messaging, but rather checking the score of the latest game or their fantasy stats on the internet while driving. Is this just as bad, or is this okay?

KELLY O'CONNELL: It is just as bad because, again, your eyes are removed from the road, you are not concentrating on your surroundings. And the guys with the football and the games and the scores are even worse because now they're agitated because they probably didn't win.

KELLY MANNING: As the parent of a teenage driver, let's say you found out your daughter was text messaging or picture messaging or checking the internet while driving. What would you do?

KELLY O'CONNELL: Well, first we'd have a very long chat about it in reference to not doing it. If I find out she keeps doing it, either the phone goes or the car goes. One or the other.

KELLY MANNING: What are the consequences if a person is caught using any of these communication functions while driving, such as text messaging, picture messaging or checking the internet?

KELLY O'CONNELL: I know you can be fined starting up from anywhere to a hundred dollars up. But the other consequences are driving off the road, running into somebody. Various things can happen, are going to be very costly.

KELLY MANNING: Do you know of any accidents that a young person has gotten into, or anyone has gotten into, due to being distracted from like text messaging or any other communication device?

KELLY O'CONNELL: I know of an incident when there was an individual who was texting, got a response, read it, didn't realize the road was turning, and because her eyes were not on the road, did not turn with it so ended up a little bit on the curb of somebody's yard.

KELLY MANNING: So would you say that person was let off easy because no one was injured and no damage was done to the vehicle?

KELLY O'CONNELL: Yes, that person got off very easily. There could have been a lot more damage. The car could have went into a house. It could have hit somebody on a sidewalk. Anything could have happened other than the minor little off the road.

KELLY MANNING: Are there any other things you would recommend not doing while driving because the driver would be too distracted?

KELLY O'CONNELL: There are tons of things: Doing your makeup, reading the newspaper, anything that's going to involve taking your eyes off the road and not concentrating on the surroundings around you should not be done while you're behind the wheel and the car is running.

KELLY MANNING: Well, thank you very much for being with us here today, Kelly. Is there anything else you can share with our young drivers out there who are just getting started on the road?

KELLY O'CONNELL: I would just like to say, no matter what your age, nobody should be texting while driving. And all those teenagers 18 and under who think they may know everything, really are not even to be having the cell phone on while driving.

KELLY MANNING: This has been an Infocast produced by the State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. Thank you for listening.