

Is Texting While Driving Worse Than Drunk Driving?

At some point of time, we've all received a text message while driving—and we've all sneaked a peek to read it. Maybe you have even typed a reply back while behind the wheel. In the back of your mind, you know that texting while driving is dangerous, but you say to yourself that it could be worse. At least you're not drunk driving.

Texting while driving is a dangerous habit, but have you ever wondered how dangerous texting while driving really is? Could it actually be worse than drunk driving?

In 2009, Car and Driver put this question to the test and conducted a driving test to investigate if texting while driving is more dangerous than drunk driving. The experiment's first step was to test and measure the reaction times of two drivers while driving sober without any distractions, and then while texting while driving.

A red light was mounted to the front windshield to simulate a car braking in front of them. Car and Driver tested the drivers' reaction time to see how long it would take for each of them to hit the brake when sober, when legally drunk, when reading an email on their phone, and texting while driving by sending a text.

The results were surprising!

- Driving sober = .54 seconds to brake
- Legally drunk (.08) = added 4 feet
- Reading an email while driving = added 36 feet
- Texting while driving = added 70 feet

The reaction times for both drivers were better while driving drunk as compared to reading an email or texting while driving while they were sober. Car and Driver's Mike Austin said, he was "way worse" while he was emailing or texting.

Millions of people text, talk, or email while behind the wheel. According to the United States Department of Transportation, 1.6 million car crashes and 6,000 fatalities are due to cell phone use behind the wheel every year.

Americans view drinking and driving as wrong, and we go through extra measures to avoid it like assigning a designated driver, calling a cab, or setting limits. But when it comes to texting while driving, we are not as careful and think much less about doing it.

Texting while driving is much more dangerous than drunk driving. Informing the public about just how dangerous it is will be the first step in changing America's attitudes about texting while driving.