

TEXTING SAFETY

By: Melissa Jeremiah, RN

Director of Hoosier Uplands Home Health & Hospice

I am amazed to see the number of people that are on our interstates driving 70 miles per hour and talking on the phone, or texting. The National Safety Council states, "Drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be in a crash while using the cell phone." "80 percent of crashes are related to driver inattention. The #1 source of driver inattention is cell phones." "81 percent of cell phones owners report they talk on their cell while driving and 40 percent of teens and young adults report they send and receive text messages while driving."

The American College of Emergency Physicians Foundation issued an advisory saying you should follow the guidelines listed below regarding texting and cell phone use:

1. Don't text or use a cell phone while engaged in any physical activities that require sustained attention; such as walking, biking, boating, rollerblading or even intermittent-contact sports such as baseball, football or soccer.
2. Be mindful of the distraction and corresponding reflex-response delay that texting can cause, and don't text in any environments in which excessive inattention can cause safety concerns, such as while sitting alone at night, waiting for a bus, or in a crowded area, where one could easily become a victim of a personal theft.
3. Never text or use a hand-held cell phone while driving or motorcycling, and use caution even with headsets.
4. Avoid becoming distracted by rummaging through purses, backpacks or clothing by keeping cell phones and blackberries in easy-to-find locations, such as phone pockets or pouches.
5. Ignore the call or message if it might interfere with concentration during critical activities that require attention. Better yet, turn off the device beforehand during times when incoming calls or messages might prove to be a dangerous or even simply embarrassing or annoying interference.
6. Be mindful of the distraction and corresponding reflex-response delay that texting can cause, and don't text in any environments in which excessive inattention can cause safety concerns, such as while sitting alone at night, waiting for a bus, or in a crowded area, where one could easily become a victim of a personal theft.

"The bottom line is to be aware of potential safety concerns and to simply exercise caution, restraint and good judgment at all times when using a cell phone or blackberry," said Dr. Linda Lawrence, of the American College of Emergency Physicians Foundation.