



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving

PATTY RITCHIE April 18, 2019



As technology improves, and becomes more mobile, the number of people using that technology while driving only continues to grow. That is why, during the month of April, the nation marks “Distracted Driving Awareness Month,”—a time to raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving, and teach people the importance of maintaining focus behind the wheel.

According to AAA, potentially unsafe distractions—where the eyes of a driver may not be focused on the roads—can last for nearly a half a minute as a driver uses voice-based

technology to dial, change music or send a text message. To put that into context, a driver traveling only 25 miles per hour can travel the length of three football fields in 30 seconds.

AAA says car crashes are four times as likely when a driver is talking on a cell phone, while those who are texting behind the wheel are up to eight times as likely to be involved in a crash.

In addition, AAA research shows that despite 60 percent of drivers believing that talking on a cell phone while behind the wheel is a serious threat to personal safety, nearly 50 percent of people still do it. The same research shows 78 percent of people believe texting while driving is a significant danger, yet 35 percent of people have admitted to doing it.

In addition, drivers continue to ignore laws about passing stopped school buses and driving unsafely through school zones. It goes without saying that you should never pass any vehicle in a school zone—school bus or not. Phone calls and text messages only make it that much more dangerous.

In order to avoid distraction, AAA recommends that you follow the below guidelines:

- Do not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Put away electronics and never use text messaging, email or internet functions while driving;
- Pre-program your GPS and adjust seats, mirrors, climate controls and sound systems before you begin driving; and
- Make sure your children and/or pets are buckled in properly.

During Distracted Driving Awareness Month, I hope you'll take steps to help yourself—and others—become more focused while on the road in an effort to improve safety for those you

share it with.