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Distracted Driving Kills!

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Communication and Public Affairs

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FORT RUCKER, Ala. — April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC) launched a new safety campaign today to remind Soldiers of the importance of keeping their full attention on the road when operating a vehicle.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), new technology in vehicles is causing motorists to become more distracted than ever. The NSC is asking all drivers to keep themselves and others around them safe by focusing on the most important task — driving!

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from operating a vehicle, including using a cellphone, eating and drinking, talking to passengers and adjusting the climate controls. According to Walt Beckman, a program manager at the USACRC, cellphone use, whether talking or texting, is the most common form of distracted driving and perhaps the most alarming.

“Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds,” Beckman said. “At 55 mph, that’s the equivalent of driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed. No driver can operate a vehicle safely unless the task of driving has their full attention.”

While some believe advances in automobile technology — such as voice-activated controls, GPS navigation and integrated Bluetooth connectivity allowing hands-free phone operation — make driving safer, the NSC says the opposite is true. These devices can lead to multitasking behind the wheel, resulting in Americans operating their vehicles more distracted than ever before.

“Multitasking is a myth,” Beckman said. “Our brains cannot perform two tasks at the same time. Any non-driving activity you engage in behind the wheel increases your risk of crashing.”

To help combat this growing epidemic, the USACRC is emphasizing the use of “Distracted Driving 101: A Study Guide to Preventable Pain, Suffering, Death and Destruction.” This exportable briefing, available for download on the USACRC website, highlights Army and DOD policy regarding the use of handheld electronic devices while driving, the myths and facts of multitasking behind the wheel, and tips to avoid distracted driving.

USACRC Command Sgt. Maj. James Light encourages Army leaders to download the briefing and share it with their Soldiers.

“Distracted driving is a leading cause of vehicle crashes on our nation’s roads, and most of these distractions is attributed to texting while driving,” said Light. “People know texting and driving is

dangerous and often illegal, but they do it anyway, and it puts others at risk. Beginning April 3, drivers will see increased law enforcement efforts, as officers will be stopping and ticketing anyone who is caught texting and driving. If you text and drive, you will pay.”.

Whether you're driving a forklift, semi-truck or just headed home after work, attentive driving is more important than ever. Create a distracted driving program and engage your workforce with ready-made communications and resources.

To access the USACRC's distracted driving briefing and other content, visit <https://safety.army.mil/OFF-DUTY/PMV-4-Cars-Trucks/Distracted-Driving>.