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# Denver Post

**Wednesday, November  
14, 2007**

**Steering teens away from**

# texting while at the wheel

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Colorado's teenage drivers almost unanimously believe that text-messaging while driving is dangerous, yet more than half of them do it on a regular basis, according to a recent survey.

AAA-Colorado surveyed 460 teen drivers across the state this fall and found that 97 percent of them agreed text-messaging behind the wheel is dangerous. Yet 51 percent of them admitted doing it and 66 percent admitted they talk on cellphones while driving.

That puts Colorado above the national average of 46 percent of teens admitting to texting and 51 percent talking on cellphones.

But even those numbers may be low.

"It's a difficult figure to get accurately, because very few will admit they do it," said Eric

## Texting and Driving

Escudero, a spokesman for AAA-Colorado.

School officials say text-messaging has become so popular that they have been forced to ban cellphones from classrooms

"Text-messaging is a huge issue; they do it all the time," said principal Bill Kohut of South High School in Denver, where a news conference announced AAA's result. "I can't imagine that it doesn't carry over into cars."

South High senior Roksolana Fajda, 17, guesses she text-messages about 100 times each day, even while she's driving.

"It's not so hard sending a message (because she can type without looking). It's harder to read the messages because your eyes have to leave the road," she said.

Fajda joined about 25 of her classmates and took a pledge Tuesday to stop texting and phoning while driving.

"When I heard some of the stories, I realized how dangerous it can be. Two seconds could affect my life, and hurt others," she said.

"I think our kids were startled when they heard of the dangers," said Kohut, the principal. He cited an example in New York last July, where five teens were killed while the driver was text-messaging. He also mentioned a case two years ago in Highlands Ranch, in Top of Form

which a high school driver killed a bicyclist while text-messaging.

Typing text messages on a cellphone while driving is legal for most drivers in Colorado.

Colorado State Patrol Master Trooper Ron Watkins confirmed that only drivers with learner's permits are prohibited from using cellphones. But that doesn't stop him from ticketing someone on the phone.

"If I see someone weaving in traffic while text-messaging or talking on their phone," Watkins said, "I'll pull them over and issue a ticket for careless driving."

# Rocky Mountain News

## Wednesday, November 14, 2007

### Teen drivers admit texting

State troopers plan to increase education efforts

By Marilyn Robinson, Special To The Rocky  
November 14, 2007

State troopers plan to step up education efforts and continue cracking down on inattentive driving after alarming statistics showed that more than half of Colorado teens responding to a survey admitted to text messaging while behind the wheel.

Fifty-one percent of Colorado teen drivers said they have text messaged, and 66 percent said they talk on their cell phones, while driving, according to survey results released Tuesday.

The numbers were far ahead of a similar national study of teen drivers that showed 46 percent were text messaging and 51 percent talked on cell phones while driving.

The Colorado results, released at a news conference at Denver's South High School, were based on an online survey conducted by AAA Colorado that drew 460 responses from teens in 84 cities and towns across the state.

Participating, in addition to AAA, were the Colorado State Patrol, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association and the Colorado Department of Transportation.

The survey results on cell phone use and text messaging are troubling, said Lt. Col. Rick Salas of the Colorado State Patrol.

"Obviously, the concern is another distraction," Salas said. "You have young drivers with little experience. A lot of them are thinking about other things. This increases distractions to the point where you're going to end up with some type of traffic crash resulting in death or injury."

The survey also showed:

- 97 percent of teen survey respondents believe text messaging while driving is dangerous.
- 91 percent believe there should be legal limits on cell phone use, including text messaging, while driving.
- 74 percent admitted not knowing traffic laws for cell phone use in Colorado.
- 73 percent said strict penalties, including losing their license, would make them less likely to text message while driving.
- 38 percent admitted to taking their eyes off the road while text messaging.

It's against the law for those with learner's permits to use cell phones while driving, officials said, and they are hoping that the survey results spark dialogue among parents and young drivers.

"We hope that parents will examine their own cell phone use to make sure they're setting a positive example - do as I say and as I do," said Eric Escudero, a spokesman for AAA.

Rylie Thordsen, a junior at Standley Lake High School in Westminster, said she knows her friends like to stay in touch with one another and figure out what's going on. But she said she and her mom have discussed the dangers.

"It's not worth it," she said of being able to get in instant contact while driving.

During the news conference, a number of young people signed a banner promising not to use their cell phones to text message while driving.

"Our ultimate goal is to keep them safe, keep them alive," state patrol spokesman Ryan Sullivan said.

### **Tips for teens**

- Turn off your cell phone. Let voicemail capture your voice and text messages.
- If you have to call or text while driving, pull off the road safely and stop.
- Recognize that text messaging can be a habit. Get support from your friends by letting them know you are working on breaking the texting habit.
- If you think you still will be tempted to text and drive, put your phone somewhere you can't reach it, like the trunk.

### **Tips for parents**

- Don't call or text your teen at times when you know they are likely driving.
- Review your teen's cell phone bill with them to see if they are texting at times they are likely to be driving.
- Share this information with your teen.
- Know the Colorado Graduated Drivers Licensing law. It's illegal for teens with an instruction permit to use a cell phone while driving.
- Establish family rules that prohibit texting while driving.*Source: Aaa*

# Fox 31

# Wednesday, November 14, 2007

## Teens Ignore Dangers of Texting While Driving

**Colorado survey results are alarming**

Last Edited: Tuesday, 13 Nov 2007, 5:56 PM MST

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DENVER - An alarming number of teen drivers in Colorado admit they ignore the dangers of texting while driving.

It's not hard to figure out how dangerous it is to engage in text messaging while driving. In fact, 97 percent of Colorado teens surveyed believe it is dangerous.

Nevertheless, 51 percent of teens in the same survey admitted to texting while driving. That is higher than teen drivers in other states. 46 percent said they text while driving nationally.

The news is stunning, when you consider the challenges of driving in our [traffic](#).

< <http://www.myfoxcolorado.com/myfox/pages/Traffic>  
[C](#)>

Additional Survey Results:

- 66% in Colorado talk on cell phone while driving
- 51% nationally talk on cell phone while driving
- 74% in Colorado do not know laws for cell phone use

The survey was conducted by AAA Colorado in August and September

2007. There were 460 respondents from 84 communities.

AAA hopes the survey will raise awareness and push parents to talk about the danger of texting and talking.

"In my 28 years, I've seen numerous needless deaths associated with inattentive driving," said Lt. Col Richard Salas of the Colorado State Patrol. "Driving on today's highways takes your full responsibility and your full attention."

One of those deaths was 17-year-old Carissa Thompson of Westminster this summer. "She was not wearing her seatbelt, not paying attention and ended up hitting the back of an 18-wheeler," says classmate Rylie Thordsen of Standley Lake High School.

"It was a reality this could happen to my daughter," says Robin Thordsen, Rylie's Mother.

So Rylie promised her mom that she would never use her phone while driving.

Driver distraction also sent Patrick Sims of Highlands Ranch to jail and four years probation.

The 17-year-old was driving eastbound on Wildcat Reserve Parkway and texting when he veered into the bike lane.

His girlfriend screamed and when he looked up, he saw a bicyclist inches away. He hit and killed 64-year-old Jim Price.

"Teenagers just live in the here and now. We have life experiences to know if we don't call back right away, they're not going to go anywhere," says Robin Thordsen.

She says parents must remind their teens, no text message... no phone call is worth losing their life for or taking the life of another.

A group of teens at Denver South High School signed a pledge Tuesday that they wouldn't text and drive. They challenged students and all drivers everywhere to make the same pledge.

# CW2

**Wednesday, November  
14, 2007**

## **Students pledge to stop texting while driving**

**More than half of Colorado teens admit to doing it. Now, a group of students wants to change that**

by Laurie Cipriano, News2  
November 14, 2007

DENVER (KWGN) — More than half of Colorado teens who drive admit to texting while driving. Now more group of teens at a local high school are taking a stand. They want other teens to stop engaging in this dangerous behavior before another life is lost.

Text messaging while driving has become a growing trend among teenagers. There's no dispute about it, if you're driving, texting is definitely a distraction.

Driving while texting may seem like NBD, as in "no big deal."

"People figure, 'I'm just not looking at the road for two seconds to read my text,'" said Abby Reynolds, a student at South High School in Denver.

She wants to remind other teens. It can actually be deadly.

"She ended up hitting the back of a semi-truck and ended up passing away," said student Rylie Thordsen as she recounted the fate of one of her peers.

AAA says 51 percent of licensed Colorado teens admit to texting and driving, and that's more than the national average, which is 46 percent. Now, teens at South High School in Denver are trying to bring the Colorado average down.

"AAA came to our school not too long ago, and they were wondering if we'd be interested in helping them campaign and launch this campaign that they're starting," said Reynolds.

Tuesday, students at South High School promised to stop texting and driving, and they put it in writing.

"We are asking all students at South High School, to sign the pledge to stop this practice of texting while driving," said Sierra Hilton, a senior at South High School.

They are hoping other Colorado schools will follow suit.

"As a student body, we challenge you, and other high schools across Colorado, to do the same," said Hilton.

"I'm guilty of it, but I signed the pledge and I'm not going to do it anymore because so many teenagers don't realize how fatal it can be," said Reynolds.

"You just have to be safe when you're driving, especially as a new driver," said Hilton.

The survey also showed that 73 percent of Colorado teens say that strict penalties, such as losing their license, would make them less likely to text while driving.

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