Description

The following statement was developed by the Trauma Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Pediatric Surgical Nurses Association, Inc. (APSNA) and approved by the APSNA membership at the 2014 Annual Scientific Conference and updated in 2018.

APSNA Position

It is the position of APSNA that:

1. Health care providers will be educated in teaching children, adolescents, and families about the dangers of distracted driving.
2. Each provider is encouraged to utilize appropriate teaching strategies with this group to highlight the inherent dangers of distracted driving.
3. Childhood “injuries” are not accidents; they are preventable sequela of unsafe behaviors that can be prevented with proper education, adult supervision, use of protective devices, legislative support for product safety and appropriate laws to protect our most precious resource, our children.
4. All health care providers, teachers, legislators, public safety advocates and government officials support proposed public laws and regulations that STOP or limit the use of electronic devices while driving.
5. Efforts should be made to increase community awareness with targeted campaigns against distracted driving, as well as community investments guided toward educational programs, commercials, roadside signs, and driver’s education classes.

Background

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert attention away from the primary task of driving. Distractions can include, but are not limited to, texting, talking on a cell phone, eating/drinking, grooming, reading, using a GPS, watching a video, or adjusting a radio or other audio player. (Adeola & Gibbons, 2013). According to 2016 statistics from Get the Message: A Teen Distracted Driving Program, an average of 8 people are killed and 1,161 are injured daily as a result of a distracted driver in the United States (Adeola, Omorogbe, & Johnson, 2016). For drivers 15-19 years old involved in fatal crashes, 21% were using a cell phone. 11% of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as “distracted” at the time of the crash.

Today, there are more than 320 million wireless subscriptions in the United States, and nearly 80% of teenagers aged 12-17 years own a cell phone (Adeola, Omorogbe, & Johnson, 2016).
According to the National Occupant Protection Use Survey, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell-phones or manipulate electronic devices while driving every day (United States Department of Transportation, 2013). Drivers are 23 times more likely to crash if texting and driving. Sending a text removes the eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. If travelling at 55 MPH, this is equal to driving the length of an entire football field blind. 20% of teens and 10% of parents admit to having extended multi-message texting while driving. 28% of teens correctly believe that talking on a cell phone while driving poses a risk, 79% recognize that text messaging while driving is very dangerous.

Facts

- Although all drivers are at risk, research has indicated that teenage drivers are over-represented in motor vehicle crashes due to distracted driving.
- Multitasking while driving impairs performance.
- Driving utilizes visual, auditory, manual and cognitive skills. Furthermore, novice drivers typically lack experience and knowledge of more experienced drivers, already increasing a teen’s risk of crash.
- Though many other tasks such as eating, talking to passengers, and following navigational systems while driving may be considered distractions, texting while driving involves 3 types of distraction (manual, cognitive, and visual), which greatly increases probability of an accident (Bellal et al., 2016)
- Drivers believe their own crash risk is lower than other drivers crash risk.
- Teens have an increased feeling of invincibility leading to risk-taking behaviors.
- Laws prohibiting distracted driving vary from state to state.

Recommendations to increase knowledge of the risks of adolescent distracted driving:

- Be informed and set firm rules for household members. Review the FCC website on Distracted Driving: http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/distracted-driving
- Review comprehensive information including the most recent research on Distracted Driving: http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html
- Evaluate the NHTSA “5 to Drive” Teen Safety Campaign to Reduce High Death Rates in Teens and incorporate this information in anticipatory guidance activities. Visit: http://www.nhtsa.gov

References:


*Effective Date: 2019
Originated by: Trauma Special Interest Group
Adopted by: APSNA Board of Directors
Original approval (May 2014)
Reaffirmed on: March 2019*