

Cell Phone Safety

Safety Feature or Risk Factor?

Many states have considered or introduced legislation to restrict the use of cellular phones in moving vehicles.

No easy answers. Do people who use cellular phones while driving increase their risk of crashing? There is no simple answer because available data points in many directions.

A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* researched 699 drivers who had cellular telephones and who were involved in collisions that resulted in substantial property damage but no personal injury. A total of 26,798 cell phone calls were made during the 14-month study period. From their data, the researchers concluded that the *risk of a collision was four times greater when a cell phone was used.*

CELL PHONE SAFETY TIPS

The National Safety Council offers the following recommendations to ensure the safe use of cellular phones:

- Consider the type of phone and its ease of operation when purchasing a car phone.
- Make sure your phone is positioned where it's easy to see and reach.
- Request a dealer demonstration of a mobile phone and then take a test drive.
- Keep both hands on the steering wheel and eyes on the road.
- Use the speaker phone and keep the handset in its cradle whenever your vehicle is in motion.
- Become familiar with how to use the phone. Read the user manual and practice.
- Assess the traffic situation before placing or receiving calls.
- Dial phone numbers only when stopped.
- Drive in the slow traffic lane when on the phone.
- Do not take notes while driving. Use the phone's voice mail feature to eliminate this distraction.
- Remember that driving safely takes precedence over phone calls at all times.

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