



© 2012 Douglas Stockdale

HOW MANY will it take?

Myths about the dangers of cell phone distracted driving are widespread. NSC is dispelling these myths by sharing the truth about this deadly behavior.

MYTH: A hands-free device eliminates the dangers of cell phone use while driving.

FACT: Hands-free devices are no safer than handheld devices because they do not eliminate cognitive distraction – the distraction to the brain. The brain cannot process two complex thinking tasks simultaneously. As it switches from a cell phone conversation to driving and back again, the brain becomes so overloaded that drivers can miss seeing up to 50% of their driving environment.

MYTH: If cell phone use while driving is distracting to the brain, then drivers also should not talk to other passengers.

FACT: Some passenger conversations can be distracting to drivers. But adult passengers often actively help drivers by monitoring and discussing traffic, and they tend to suppress the conversation when the driving environment becomes demanding. Passengers can see the roadway; callers cannot.

MYTH: Listening to the radio is as cognitively distracting as talking on a cell phone.

FACT: Listening to music is not as cognitively demanding because it is not a back-and-forth conversation in which the brain needs to formulate a response. Listening to music does not require active thinking.

For more information on cognitive distraction, read the Council's white paper, "Understanding the Distracted Brain," at thebrain.nsc.org.

MYTH: Using a cell phone is the least dangerous thing a driver could do while driving.

FACT: Visual and mechanical distractions, such as turning toward the back seat to reach for an object, can be more dangerous but are short lived. These distractions occur less frequently than cell phone conversations. Risk increases with prevalence, and NHTSA estimates that 9% of drivers are talking on cell phones or handling them at any given daylight moment. Drivers using cell phones are four times as likely to crash.

Take the pledge.
nsc.org/pledge

