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News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2013

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Recent analysis indicates cell phone distracted driving crashes vastly under-reported
*National Safety Council and Nationwide Insurance release new report on
cell phone distracted driving crashes*

Itasca, IL – Today, the [National Safety Council](http://www.nsc.org) released findings from a recent analysis of national statistics on fatal motor vehicle crashes, in a report entitled, “Crashes Involving Cell Phones: Challenges of Collecting and Reporting Reliable Crash Data,” funded in part by Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company. The report reviewed 180 fatal crashes from 2009 to 2011, where evidence indicated driver cell phone use. Of these fatal crashes, in 2011 only 52% were coded in the national data as involving cell phone use.

“We believe the number of crashes involving cell phone use is much greater than what is being reported,” said Janet Froetscher president and CEO of the National Safety Council. “Many factors, from drivers not admitting cell phone use, to a lack of consistency in crash reports being used to collect data at the scene, make it very challenging to determine an accurate number.”

Even when drivers admitted cell phone use during a fatal crash, the Council’s analysis found that in about one-half of these cases, the crash was not coded in Federal data (the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Fatal Analysis Reporting System). In addition, there are an unknown number of cases in which cell phone use involvement in crashes is impossible to determine. One example would be a driver reading an email or text message on a phone who dies in a crash without any witnesses.

The report also brings up large differences in cell phone distraction fatal crashes reported by states. For instance, in 2011, Tennessee reported 93 fatal crashes that involved cell phone use, but New York, a state with a much larger population, reported only one. Texas reported 40, but its neighboring state Louisiana reported none.

“The public should be aware that cell phone-involved fatal crashes are not accurately being reported,” said Bill Windsor, associate vice president of consumer safety at Nationwide. “These statistics influence national prevention priorities, funding decisions, media attention, legislation and policy, even vehicle and roadway engineering. There are wide-ranging, negative ramifications to safety if a fatal crash factor is substantially under-reported, as appears to be the case of cell phone use in crashes.”

In 2012, highway fatalities increased for the first time in seven years. Based on risk and prevalence of cell phone use, as reported by research and NHTSA, the National Safety Council estimates 25% of all crashes involve cell phone use.

To learn more about this issue, visit <http://distracteddriving.nsc.org>, view the cell phone crash data [whitepaper](#) and [infographic](#) on this study, or read about safety tips to help avoid [driving while distracted](#).

About Nationwide

Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, based in Columbus, Ohio, is one of the largest and strongest diversified insurance and financial services organizations in the U.S. and is rated A+ by both A.M. Best and Standard & Poor's. The company provides customers a full range of insurance and financial services, including auto insurance, motorcycle, boat, homeowners, pet, life insurance, farm, commercial insurance, annuities, mortgages, mutual funds, pensions, long-term savings plans and specialty health services. For more information, visit www.nationwide.com

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About the National Safety Council

Founded in 1913 and chartered by Congress, the National Safety Council, nsc.org, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. NSC advances this mission by partnering with businesses, government agencies, elected officials and the public in areas where we can make the most impact – distracted driving, teen driving, workplace safety, prescription drug overdoses and Safe Communities.

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