



Cell Phone Fact Sheet

- Dozens of peer-reviewed scientific studies have demonstrated the risks associated with using a cell phone while driving, including a significantly increased crash risk.¹
- Drivers who use a cell phone - either handheld or hands-free - are four times more likely to be involved in a crash, according to a 1997 *New England Journal of Medicine* examination of hospital records, and a 2005 study funded by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety linking injury crashes to cell phone records.^{2,3}
- About 30 research studies conclude that there is an increased crash risk when using a cell phone while driving. Many of these studies further conclude that using a hands-free phone while driving is just as risky as talking on a handheld phone.⁴
- Many businesses and organizations understand the risk and are taking action. Among NSC members that responded to a 2009 survey, 58 percent (1,163 out of 2,004 respondents) said their organization had some type of a cell phone policy, and the majority of them reported that the policy had a positive impact. Over 70 percent of companies that prohibit the use of all wireless communication devices while driving, including hands-free phones, did not see a decrease in productivity; over 20 percent saw decreases in employee crash rates and property damage.⁵
- Cell phone use contributes to an estimated 25 percent of injury and property damage-only crashes.⁶
- Thousands of deaths each year are due to cell phone-related crashes, according to the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis.⁷
- Hundreds of millions of people use cell phones while driving. According to CTIA, The Wireless Association, there are more than 275 million cell phone subscribers.⁸ A 2008 Nationwide Insurance public opinion poll showed 81 percent of cell phone owners admitted to talking on a cell phone while driving.⁹
- Talking to a passenger while driving is significantly safer than talking on a cell phone for adult drivers, according to a University of Utah study.¹⁰ Passengers, unlike cell phone conversations, can make the driver aware of changing road conditions they might not see and can stop the conversation if traffic conditions warrant.
- The annual cost of crashes caused by cell phone use was estimated at \$43 billion in 2003, according to the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis.⁷

¹ See http://www.nsc.org/SAFETY_ROAD/DISTRACTED_DRIVING/Pages/KeyResearch.aspx for a list of research studies.

² [Association between cellular telephone calls and motor vehicle collisions](#). Redelmeier & Tibshirani. (1997) *New England Journal of Medicine*, 336; 453-458.

³ [Role of mobile phones in motor vehicle crashes resulting in hospital attendance: a case-crossover study](#). McEvoy, et al. (2005) *BMJ*, 331(7514):428

⁴ National Safety Council compilation of research comparing handheld and hands-free devices. December 2009.

⁵ [National Safety Council membership survey report](#). September 2009.

⁶ National Safety Council attributable risk estimate model. December 2009.

⁷ [A revised economic analysis of restrictions on the use of cell phones while driving](#). Cohen & Graham. (2003) *Risk Analysis*, 23(1); 5-17.

⁸ CTIA – The Wireless Association semi-annual survey results, <http://www.ctia.org/media/press/body.cfm/prid/1870>

⁹ Nationwide Insurance, May 2008. <http://www.nationwide.com/newsroom/press-release-almost-all-americans-believe-they-are-safe-drivers-2008.jsp>

¹⁰ [Passenger and Cell Phone Conversations in Simulated Driving](#). Drews, Pasupathi, Strayer. (2008) *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 14(2): 392-400