

DRIVE *for* LIFE

THE NATIONAL SAFE DRIVING TEST & INITIATIVE

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CONSUMER SAFETY NEWS

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Michelle Ubben, Allison Wharton
DRIVE *for* LIFE
800-875-4301

Drivers feel driving is getting riskier, yet most admit to dangerous behaviors *Poll: New drivers most susceptible to lure of high-tech distractions*

Washington D.C. – American drivers say the aggressive and distracted behavior of other drivers is more aggravating than traffic delays, road construction and personal stress combined. That's the finding of a new national poll of motorists who, ironically, admitted to many of the same bad highway habits they criticize in other drivers.

Most drivers admit to engaging in at least one distraction while driving – and the list is growing thanks to technological devices such as global positioning systems, DVD players and text messaging. In fact, the poll indicates that multi-tasking while driving is only likely to grow, with the youngest, least experienced drivers being the group most likely to drive while sending or reading a text message or talking on a cell phone.

All that adds up to growing anxiety among drivers, who view the road as an increasingly risky place. The third annual **DRIVE *for* LIFE** poll, conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research, found drivers feel less safe and perceive they are more likely to get into a collision than five years ago.

“We can engineer safer cars and even smarter cars that correct some driver errors,” said Anne Bélec, President and CEO, Volvo Cars of North America, LLC. “But there is no substitute for urging all drivers to be focused and committed to safety.”

DRIVE *for* LIFE is a nationwide educational effort sponsored by Volvo Cars of North America, in partnership with the National Association of Police Organizations and the National Sheriffs' Association, with expertise from AAA and technical support from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

*Most drivers
multi-tasking*

Driving feels riskier

DRIVE for LIFE encourages safe driving habits through its Web site, www.driveforlife.com and an annual 30-minute national television broadcast, **DRIVE for LIFE: The National Safe Driving Test**, that is also distributed to high schools that teach drivers' education.

Nearly half of those surveyed in the new poll say they find driving more aggravating than just two years ago, with one in four calling it *much* more aggravating. And, while an equal number of drivers cited aggressive and distracted drivers as the greatest safety threats on the road, most drivers admitted to one or more of those behaviors themselves:

- ∞ **Sixty-eight percent of drivers admit to speeding**, and three out of four say it's acceptable to drive five miles per hour over the speed limit. One in four drivers even say driving 10 miles per hour over the limit is acceptable. Those numbers climb among young drivers, ages 16-20, with 88 percent sanctioning speeds 5 miles per hour over the limit and more than 50 percent approving speeds of 10 miles per hour over the limit.
- ∞ **One in three drivers surveyed admit to driving while emotionally upset** and 16 percent say they have driven in a hostile or aggressive manner because they were late.
- ∞ While one in three drivers say cell phone usage by other drivers is their greatest aggravation on the road, **43 percent say they use a cell phone while driving**. And 70 percent of parents of teen drivers say their children have cell phones. Eleven states and the District of Columbia have laws restricting cell phones while driving, while 19 states also track mobile phone involvement in auto crashes.
- ∞ Beyond talking on a cell phone, most drivers admit to engaging in at least one distracting behavior, with **52 percent saying they eat while driving and 17 percent saying they even read while driving**. Ten percent of drivers surveyed said a romantic moment has competed with their attention while driving.

68% admit speeding

1 in 3 drive upset

43% use cell phone while driving

10% mix driving and romance

Emerging technology may add to drivers' distractions: Already, eight percent of drivers said they have adjusted a DVD player for passengers while driving, six percent said they consulted a global positioning system, and six percent said they have read or sent a text message while driving. And that's only likely to grow: The youngest drivers, ages 16-20, were far more likely to talk on a cell phone while driving (64 percent compared to 43 percent of all drivers) and even to read or send text messages while driving (32 percent compared to 6 percent of all drivers.)

32% of young drivers read or send text messages

“The bottom line is that attention is a zero sum game, said Dr. Steven Yantis, Professor at Johns Hopkins University, Dept. of Psychological and Brain Sciences. “If you shift attention from one area of perception, you will pay a price in another. Behind the wheel of a moving vehicle, that price may be extremely high if attention is diverted at the split second that the driving conditions change, for instance, when the driver in front of you hits the brakes.”

For more information, please contact Allison Wharton, National Coordinator - awharton@ronsachs.com - (800) 875-4301

A whopping 94 percent of drivers say they wear a seat belt all or most of the time, and for good reason: Nearly one in four drivers said a seat belt saved their own life or the life of a family member. Nearly one in three drivers said they have had a collision in the past five years – and one in 10 had a collision in the past year.

1 in 4 know someone saved by a seatbelt

But this exemplary behavior by drivers drops dramatically for passengers – especially when the driver and passengers are teens. While 76 percent of drivers say passengers traveling with them always wear seat belts, only 43 percent of teen drivers say their passengers always buckle up. And safety-belt usage among teens becomes even more lax with alcohol consumption. In 2003, 74 percent of the young drivers who had been drinking and were killed in crashes were *not* wearing safety belts.

Teen passengers less likely to buckle up

“Sadly, traffic crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for American children and young adults,” said National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator Jeffrey Runge, M.D. “Parents need to understand the risks and set driving limits that can save their lives.”

NHTSA’s Runge: setting limits is key

Ironically, though, the poll shows drivers value safety: drivers cited safety as the most important feature to them in choosing a vehicle, topping economy, fuel efficiency, seating and cargo space, speed and performance, and appearance.

Safety is top consideration in choosing a vehicle

Interestingly, a majority of drivers polled favor retesting drivers. Most (56 percent) think drivers should be retested at least every 10 years, 76 percent support retesting after age 75, 73 percent support retesting after a moving violation resulting in a license suspension or revocation, and 41 percent favor retesting after moving from one state to another. Only 24 percent think drivers should never be retested.

Most favor retesting

DRIVE for LIFE provides voluntary opportunities for drivers to retest their knowledge of the rules of the road and how to handle road hazards that arise – both through a test on the Web site, www.driveforlife.com, and in the interactive television broadcast. **DRIVE for LIFE: The National Safe Driving Test** is broadcast nationally in the summer and fall and is later distributed free of charge to high schools for young driver education.

“As drivers, we have a shared responsibility for the culture on our roads and the cornerstone for it is in knowing the rules of the road. But in reality, most drivers have not taken a driver’s test since they were 16 years old and their knowledge can get sloppy,” said Bella Dinh-Zarr, Ph.D., Director of Traffic Safety Policy for AAA. “It’s important that drivers periodically refresh their knowledge.”

In other common safety lapses, the poll found:

- ∞ One in three admit to driving through a red light or driving through a stop sign without coming to a complete stop,
- ∞ One in three admit to driving while drowsy,
- ∞ 18 percent of drivers thought it acceptable to drive after consuming an alcoholic beverage.

1 in 3 drive drowsy

42% fail to check tire pressure regularly.

The poll also revealed that many drivers don't make vital car maintenance enough of a priority. One in four drivers thought it acceptable to drive a vehicle overdue for a maintenance check. And 42 percent said they only check tire pressure rarely, only before a long trip, only if noticing that tires are low (or aren't sure.)

Mason-Dixon Polling & Research interviewed 1,100 licensed drivers by telephone nationwide June 8 through June 12, 2005. Margin for error is plus or minus 3%.

DRIVE for LIFE aims to encourage safer driving behavior by highlighting driver attitudes and behaviors, arming drivers with safety strategies, and advocating for drivers to adopt good habits behind the wheel through its interactive TV program, **DRIVE for LIFE: The National Safe Driving Test**, and its Web site, www.driveforlife.com. The **National Safe Driving Test** is broadcast nationally in the summer and fall.

Volvo has been building cars with safety in mind for more than 75 years. To promote driver awareness, Volvo will give away a 2005 Volvo S40 2.4i to the winner of a sweepstakes on the **DRIVE for LIFE** Web site, www.driveforlife.com, between July 1 and August 15. U.S. residents 18 years old or older may register to win on the Web site. Entrants are asked to take a short quiz on driving safety when they register.