

NEWS BREAK

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, February 26, 2017 of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

***Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.**

Article: Why drivers use their phones: A cognitive expert weighs in (NW SUNDAY, B1)

Vocabulary: Match the words to the numbered definitions in the chart below.

A. addictive	1. having the attention diverted
B. cognitive	2. characterized by actions based on sudden desires, whims, or inclinations rather than careful thought
C. compel	3. any pleasant event that follows a response and therefore increases the likelihood of the response recurring in the future
D. distracted	4. more than normally susceptible to addiction
E. impulsive	5. anything, as an act or event, that serves as a stimulus and initiates or precipitates a reaction or series of reactions
F. reward	6. of or relating to the mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning
G. trigger	7. to force or drive, especially to a course of action

Comprehension:

1. What is the average time behind the wheel it takes to do the following things: read a text message, change the radio or HVAC with a button, use voice commands or compose a voice text or program a GPS?
2. A simple traffic ticket for distracted driving costs \$124, but isn't reported to official court records or insurance companies.
3. Washington state code: "A person operating a moving motor vehicle while holding a wireless communications device to his or her ear is guilty of a traffic infraction." (2008) Are hands-free and emergency calls legal?
4. Reading or writing a text message using a handheld device is an infraction. But is entering a phone number or name into your phone?

5. Texting and handheld calling become primary offenses, meaning an officer can pull over someone for solely that violation. True or false?
6. Commercial-vehicle drivers may not use a handheld device for texting, even “while temporarily stationary,” including traffic jams or a stoplight. True or false?
7. Research has shown that taking eyes off the road for a few seconds or multitasking are as dangerous as what?
8. So, why do drivers still impulsively reach for their phones?
9. Dr. Barbara Jennings, of Sandia National Laboratories, summed up the brain’s natural chemical response to cellphones in a 2013 TED Talk. What were her main points?
10. How do people with more addictive behavior patterns react to their devices of phone calls, while driving?
11. Physiology 101: The front part of the brain is called the prefrontal cortex. What is it responsible for?
12. Lawmakers now are mulling proposals that would ban what?

Discussion Questions or Extension Essay Questions:

- Do you see people talking and texting on their phones while driving?
- Do you see your parents do this? Do you (if you’re a driver)? Have they talked with you about this issue?
- Do you feel safe in a car where someone is texting and driving? Why or why not?
- Have you ever seen large commercial truck drivers using their phones while driving?
- How does texting/talking and driving make you feel?
- How can drivers fix the problem, if they feel compelled to answer texts, etc... while behind the wheel?
- What new information did you learn from reading this article?

Imaging studies that show high levels of blood flowing through the brain when people try to multitask have proved this, he said. The odds of crashing increases sharply after drivers take their eyes off the road for four seconds, the time it takes to read an average text message, Strayer said.

Cognitive distractions are a significant source of crashes, he said. Using voice commands to change music or compose a voice text, for instance, can take more than 15 seconds, according to Strayer.

- The odds of crashing increase after drivers take their eyes off the road for 4 seconds. Why do so many drivers attempt fate this way?
- Is your life worth a text? Do you think people link these things: life/death & texting or making a call?

In Washington, the current, decade-old laws prohibit drivers from using cellphones at their ears or to text.

Lawmakers now are mulling proposals that would ban all use of handheld devices in most situations, increase the fine on the second citation and prohibit watching video.

- Do you think new laws will change behavior? Why or why not?

Drivers are more likely to engage in distracting activities when they are waiting for a cue from a traffic signal, as well as when they are stopped at intersections, the study says.

- Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

Strayer began researching distracted driving at the turn of the millennium. And since then, besides the emergence of smartphones, the evolution of vehicles' built-in electronic interfaces and other new features have shaped how he studies distracted driving.

"The car itself now becomes an extension of the phone," he said.

Those sorts of technological changes, safety officials and researchers say, have played a part in the nation's growing number of motor-vehicle deaths.

Last week, the National Safety Council released new numbers showing crash fatalities last year overall increased 6 percent nationwide.

"We're seeing an unprecedented spike in fatal crashes," Strayer said. "In all honesty, Facebook, liking things on Facebook, doing Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram — those things don't belong with a driver when they're driving."

- How can we get more people off their phones while driving?
- Why do you think social media is such a large factor? Why can't people wait to get to their destination before checking messages?
- Do you think this article will change your behavior when driving with your phone nearby? Why or why not?

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