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Multi-tasking or Playing with Fire?

In today's day and age, texting is synonymous with the word "teenager". Society and the media have tried to make us believe that all teenagers crave constant contact with their friends and are fluent in texting lingo, casually slipping "LOL" into everyday conversations. While this may be true of some teens, the vast majority of teens text out of convenience, or more simply, out of boredom. Either way, texting has become an integral part of adolescent life. Teens seem to text any time and anywhere; at breakfast, on the way to school, in class, out of class, while doing homework, at the dinner table, and even, while they are falling asleep. Consequently, it is not a big shock to find out that many teens text while behind the wheel. Although the state of California banned texting while driving in January of 2008, the law has not had much practical effect. The problem is that teenagers often don't realize the danger of what they see as harmless multi-tasking. Studies have shown that the dangers of driving while texting rival the dangers of drunk driving. This shocking fact is little known and not publicized enough. Teens need to realize exactly how dangerous it is for themselves, and all the other drivers around them, when they choose to take their thumbs off the steering wheel and pound out the latest gossip. Texting behind the wheel is a hazard to the public, not just a personal risk. The best way to get teens to stop texting while driving is not to scare them with rules or laws, but rather, to break down the facts and show them the real consequences of this dangerous practice. In 2008 alone, there were 11,773 deaths because of drunk driving. This translates to 11,773 people losing their lives because of someone's irresponsible actions. If texting while driving is just as dangerous as drunk

driving, then that one simple text may very well lead to the end of an innocent life. If teens are forced to face this reality, it is almost guaranteed that they will think twice before they send the next text while behind the wheel. What they thought was harmless multi-tasking is actually flirting with disaster. This strategy of raising awareness is the most effective way of reaching teens because it is not just telling them what they can't do, but it is showing them what their dangerous actions can lead to. If the community, schools, and parents were willing to work together to raise awareness against the dangers of texting behind the wheel, the roads would be a much safer place.