The Dangers of Driving and Cell Phones – Will Oprah Make a Difference?

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According to the National Safety Counsel, the following is true:

1. It's not up for debate: ***driving and using a cell phone is very dangerous.*** There's just too many studies already done that establish this. Though more and more studies are being done, we've already got *50+ research studies* giving the same exact research result.

2. It's proven that drivers using a cell phone are *4 (four) times more likely to be in a crash*. That's 400% higher risk of an accident, folks. (See, 1997 *New England Journal of Medicine* study; 2005 Insurance Institute for Highway Safety study).

3. The risk is JUST AS HIGH when you're using a *hands-free cell phone* as holding it in your hand. It's the distraction that is the key here.   The number one source for driver distraction in a crash today is … yes … cell phones (Virginia Tech study).

4. Still, most of us do use our cell phone while driving: *81 percent* of those asked said they talk on their phone while driving (Nationwide Insurance study).

At the beginning of this year, Illinois law went into effect that bans the use of cell phones (including texting) while driving a motor vehicle.   Also in January 2010, Transportation Secretary LaHood issued a national ban for commercial truck drivers to use cell phones while driving their big rigs, buses, etc. Penalties (civil and criminal) are included in the federal mandate.

All this got some news coverage, but perhaps the biggest thing to hit our area: Oprah.

In January 2010, Oprah devoted her attention to this danger – not only by having one of her TV shows educate viewers on the issue (it was re-run this week), but also by lending her name (and her time) to national efforts attempting to ban cell phone usage by drivers.

Can Oprah make the difference? Have you used your cell phone in the car while driving lately — to call or to text? Seen someone on their cell while you were driving to work this morning?

Then you know the answer.