

Keep in mind: Texting while driving not worth risk

Summer for teens across Arizona means searching for jobs, planning for fun and enjoying a few months of freedom from schoolwork. Unfortunately, another memorable part of the year is here: dangerous driving season.

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety dubs the days between Memorial Day and Labor Day the "100 deadliest days" for teens to be on the road. But many of these fatal accidents can be avoided by educating teens, their families and their communities about the dangers of texting and driving.

It can be hard for anyone, teens or adults, to resist the urge to respond quickly to a text. In fact, a recent poll found that 43 percent of teens admit to texting and driving. The same survey found that nine out of 10



MY TURN
ALBERTO GUTIER

teens expect recipients of their texts and e-mails to respond within five minutes. The pressure is on — this data clearly shows that the temptation to text while driving is greater than ever before.

That's why AT&T developed AT&T DriveMode, an app that auto-responds to any incoming texts with a message that says the driver will reply when it is safe. It silences incoming text noises and sends calls to voice mail, minimizing the temptation to respond. The company's

goal is to send a simple message to anyone who considers texting while driving: "It can wait."

One study by the Texas Transportation Institute concluded that when people read or send texts while driving, their reaction time doubles. Sending a text takes an average of five seconds — but doing that while traveling 65 miles per hour is the equivalent of driving the length of a football field with a blindfold on. It sounds unbelievable that anyone would unnecessarily close his or her eyes for a full five seconds while driving on the highway — and texting while driving is no different.

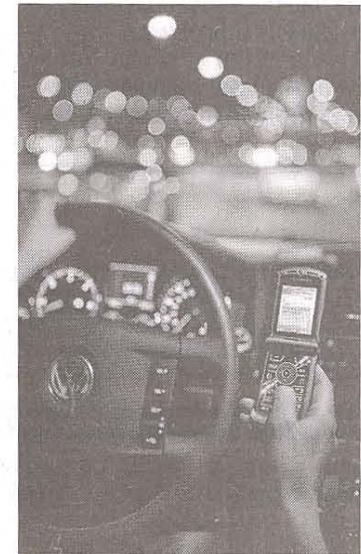
Recently, I visited NFL YET Preparatory Academy in Phoenix to see a texting-while-driving simulator and watch as the students experienced the horrors of making this fatal mis-

take. For the students, and even for veteran highway-safety advocates like me, it was eye-opening.

You can help the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety and other advocates spread the word by visiting www.att.com/itcanwait and signing the "It Can Wait" pledge — and letting your friends, loved ones, colleagues and the community know that texting while driving is taking an unacceptable risk.

Texting doesn't just affect you. It can change the lives of the passengers in your car, your family and strangers on the road. It puts everyone's safety at risk.

Alberto Gutier is director of the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety.



Summer is a dangerous driving season and a good time to remind others to resist the urge to text and drive. WES JOHNSON/THE REPUBLIC

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