Standardizing Laws for Cell Phone Use While Driving

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Cell phone use while driving has become a serious problem over the last few years. With all the accidents that occur, many of them involve cell phone use and could easily be avoided. In states, such as Georgia, there have recently been situations in which the driver was using their cell phone while driving and caused a wreck that resulted in someone losing their life. The punishments for these crimes were minimal, giving other people the impression this is acceptable. The lack of accountability for the first offense often leads to offenders repeating their mistakes, causing more deaths. Although some states have enacted them, there needs to be a standard set of laws that will lower the amount of car accidents involving cell phone use, increase safety on the roads, and ensure all citizens are aware of what not to do regarding cell phone use. Providing Americans with a list of rules to follow and expectations would reduce the amount of distracted driver accidents nationwide.

Statistics show that at any moment 660,000 people are distracted while driving due to the use of cell phones and electronic devices (“Distracted driving: Facts and statistics,” n.d.). With that distraction, careless and sometimes fatal mistakes are made. Most people think that only taking their eyes off the road for a couple of seconds does no harm, but they’re wrong. Studies have shown that the average time people take their eyes off the road is five seconds. In that time and with an average speed of fifty-five miles per hour, that’s enough time to drive the distance of a football field (“Distracted driving: Facts and statistics,” n.d.). Many things can go wrong really quickly. Laws need to be changed to deter drivers from doing things like this, not just in a few places, but everywhere across the United States.

Standardization of laws across the country is the key to lowering the amount of car accidents directly related to cell phone use. In every state, there is different legislation regarding the use of electronics while driving. This poses a problem because without a standard set of laws, there’s no blanketed course of action that dictates how this situation should be addressed. There have been situations in which the driver of a car gets distracted momentarily and causes a wreck, which results in a death. In one situation in Georgia, the driver of the car that caused the wreck was sentenced to mere months in prison and was made to work with the victim’s family to create a community service video on the dangers of texting while driving, (Neely, 2016). Many people in the surrounding areas felt this was not a harsh enough punishment for the gravity of the situation, but without proper protocol as to what the mandated disciplinary actions should be, the justice system had to administer punishment as they saw fit. This individual went on to be the culprit in another vehicle accident that resulted in the death of his girlfriend. This is one example that shows how the lack of a set protocol for the punishment for electronic device use while driving adversely impacts not only the future of the driver, but also inflicts consequences on other families as well.

Distracted driving caused by the use of cellphones, specialty radio systems, iPods, or other electronic devices reduces the safety on the road for all drivers. If there is one person out of ten on a road that is using their cell phone, the other nine are just as much at risk as the distracted driver. Initiating standardized laws that govern how all drivers must conduct themselves would reduce the risk of automobile accidents. By preventing as few as a fraction of drivers from using their cell phones, incalculable lives can be saved. Utilizing set standards, law enforcement agencies can deter drivers from using their electronics through the use of tickets to drivers caught in the act, jail time for repeat offenders, or ultimately by revoking the driver’s license for a set amount of time. With known consequences spelled out, drivers would be more likely to follow the laws and conduct themselves appropriately on roadways.

Through enacting these standard laws, this gives drivers the ability to understand what is expected of them. It is difficult, especially for individuals that travel frequently, to acknowledge the laws of a set jurisdiction if the person is not aware of what they should or should not be doing. By providing all citizens rules and regulations that are broken down and standardized, they can move forward with the knowledge required to remain safe on all roads across the United States. As it stands now, drivers of certain types of vehicles, such as semi-trucks, are held to higher standards. For example, drivers that possess their commercial driver’s license may not have any type of electronic device in their hand if the truck is in motion or in gear. If caught using their cell phone particularly, their load may be suspended, and their license can be revoked for a small duration of time. This ensures that all truck drivers adhere to the rules and expectations by enabling them to understand what is expected of them across the country. While not every driver will be traveling through multiple states daily, the understanding of what law enforcement is looking for and what will happen as a result of defying the laws is beneficial to everybody as to deters drivers from putting themselves in compromised situations that can easily turn tragic.

The repercussions of driving while texting or otherwise using electronic devices is often compared to driving while intoxicated. Texting while driving is most easily put into perspective when viewed the same as driving after having four cans of beer, (Masters, 2013). These statistics are alarming and shed light on the gravity of having no standardized laws in place to prevent cell phone use and driving. This problem has continued to grow steadily in recent years. Texting while driving has helped raise the number of fatal accidents caused by distracted drivers twenty-two percent between 2002 and 2011 from 2,600 to 3,331. These numbers are alarming and on a steady rise, but by enacting laws that specifically lay out what is allowed, as well as what is not, and the consequences for not obeying these laws it is possible to regain control of the situation. The proper steps need to be taken to heighten safety across the country for all drivers to provide a safe roadway system for all citizens to travel.

References

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