

## **Distracted Teen Driving: An Alarming Epidemic**

A 2008 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) indicated that at any given moment during daylight hours, more than 800,000 vehicles were being driven by someone using a hand-held cell phone. During that same year, nearly 6,000 people died and a half-million others were injured in car crashes involving a distracted driver, with teens having the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.

According to Dave Melton, a driving safety expert with the Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety, “because teens are novice drivers, they are more susceptible to crashes. Combine this inexperience with an ever-growing menu of distractions that cause them to lose focus on the road their surroundings, and you get the tragic images we’ve all seen in the news.”

### **The Liberty Mutual/SADD Survey**

Indeed, the enhanced technology and functionality of today’s cell phone brings more opportunities for distraction. In a 2009 survey conducted by Liberty Mutual and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), 25% of teens admitted they use their cell phone to take photos while driving, 18% say they go online, and 15% update their Facebook status while behind the wheel. The good news is that 90% of teens said they would refrain from these behaviors if asked to stop by a passenger.

### **The Liberty Mutual Teen-Parent Contract**

Liberty Mutual and SADD believe that effective parent-teen communication is critical to helping teens recognize and choose safe driving behaviors. The Parent/Teen Driving Contract is both a conversation-starter about safety issues and a customized agreement that lets you create and uphold family driving rules.

Before a teen driver is handed the keys to the car, it's a good idea to lay out some basic rules about distracted driving—and the consequences for breaking those rules. Parents have a tremendous opportunity to enhance their role in deterring unsafe driving behaviors among teens. When families build safe driving plans together it fosters effective, face-to-face communication, which leads to safer driving behaviors.

To learn more about the Liberty Mutual Parent-Teen Contract, please visit [LibertyMutualTeenDriving.com](http://LibertyMutualTeenDriving.com). For a free, no-obligation quote on auto insurance, please contact Liberty Mutual Insurance.