

The Devastating Consequences of Distracted Driving

»»» by Zoe Franklin »»»

A few seconds can change a life forever. It was April 18, 2010, when Aaron Brookens, then age 19, was driving home after spending the weekend with his girlfriend, Kelly. As he sped down Interstate 90 at 75 mph, he decided to send her a quick text. When he looked up from his phone, he saw a towering wall of white zooming toward him as his truck slammed into the rear of a slow-moving semi. His vehicle slid almost entirely underneath the semi and it took first responders nearly an hour to free Aaron from the wreckage. He was airlifted to a local hospital with two broken femurs, a fractured knee and ankle, cuts to his internal organs, and nerve damage to both of his legs. He was told he may never walk again.

According to a new survey released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately

387,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. In recent years, many states have banned texting and limited the use of cell phones while driving. However, as our nation's laws are getting tougher on one of the most common sources of driver distraction, distracted driving continues to cause fatalities and permanent injuries.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood (2009–2013) captures the essence of this seeming paradox when he says, "You see it every day: Drivers swerving in their lanes, stopping at green lights, running red ones, or narrowly missing a pedestrian because they have their eyes and minds on their phones instead of the road. Yet, people continue to assume that they can drive and text or talk at the same time." Despite these new driving laws, people's attitudes toward

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660,000 American drivers text, tweet, make phone calls, or otherwise use technology in a way that distracts them from driving. And this is only a fraction of the problem. A 2012 AAA driving study found that while 6.7% of teen drivers drove while distracted by an electronic device, more than twice as many drivers (15.1%) drove while engaged in other distracting activities, including adjusting controls, grooming, eating or drinking, reaching for an object inside the car, communicating with people outside of the car, turning around to see the backseat, and reading. Any activity that takes a driver's eyes off the road and hands off the wheel endangers the driver, passengers, and bystanders.

Driving while distracted can have devastating consequences. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. An additional

multitasking while driving have yet to change. Clearly, reducing the number of distracted drivers will take more than the efforts of law enforcement alone.

Preventing the hundreds of thousands of life-altering crashes caused by distracted driving begins with each individual deciding to focus on driving safely each time he or she enters a vehicle. And it is the responsibility of passengers, friends, and family members to speak up when they observe distracted driving.

After numerous surgeries and a lengthy rehab, Aaron has regained much of his mobility and considers himself lucky to be alive. "You don't think it's going to happen to you. I heard how many times in my life that texting and driving was dangerous, but obviously I was still doing it," he says. "If the text is that important, pull over. It's not worth your life. You might not be as fortunate as I was."

Elements of Persuasive Writing

Let's examine closely the way this author uses the modes of persuasion (ethos, pathos, and logos) to craft a persuasive article. Use a separate sheet of paper as needed.

»»» What is the author's central idea and purpose in writing this article?

»»» **ETHOS:** Establishing your credibility on the topic. How does the author establish credibility in her article? Cite specific examples from the text.

»»» **PATHOS:** Connecting to your audience on an emotional level. How does the author evoke an emotional response from her readers? Cite specific examples from the text.

»»» **LOGOS:** Using logic to persuade your audience. These are the facts and figures used to support a writer's claims or thesis. Effective use of logos also benefits the author's ethos. How is the use of logos demonstrated in the article? Cite specific examples from the text.

»»» **CRITICAL RESPONSE:** Do you think the author's use of ethos, pathos, and logos in her article was effective? Why or why not? How did these techniques strengthen her argument? How did these techniques make her article more engaging? Is there anything you would change about the article to make it even more persuasive?
