



UNDERSTANDING THE DISTRACTED BRAIN

NSC Releases White Paper on Brain Distraction during Cell Phone Use While Driving

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The National Safety Council (NSC) recently released a white paper title “Understanding the Distracted Brain: Why Driving while Using Hands-Free Cell Phones is Risky Behavior” describing the risks of using a cell phone while driving. The paper addresses the lack of understanding about the dangers of using cell phones and hands-free devices while behind the wheel.

The white paper includes references to more than 30 scientific studies and reports, describing how using a cell phone, hands-free or handheld, requires the brain to multitask – a process it cannot do safely while driving. Cell phone use while driving not only impairs driving performance, but it also weakens the brain’s ability to capture driving cues.

The paper describes how drivers who use cell phones have a tendency to “look at” but not “see” up to 50 percent of the information in their driving environment. A form of inattention blindness occurs, which results

in drivers having difficulty monitoring their surroundings, seeking and identifying potential hazards, and responding to unexpected situations.

“Cell phone use while driving has become a serious public health threat,” said Janet Froetscher, NSC president and CEO. “This white paper provides the necessary background and context for lawmakers and employers considering distracted driving legislation and policies. Several states and municipalities have passed legislation allowing hands-free devices while driving. These laws give the false impression that hands-free phones are a safe alternative, when the evidence is clear they are not. Understanding the distraction of the brain will help people make the right decision and put down their cell phones while driving.”

The white paper is available for free download on the [NSC Web site](#). Or go to <http://www.nsc.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

To learn more about cell phone use while driving, visit <http://distracteddriving.nsc.org>.