Three lives lost

Sarah Edwards, 18, North Carolina

Sarah was reading a text message when her car crossed the center line of a two-lane road and ran into the rear wheels of a loaded logging truck. She died instantly.

Angelina Bandino, 15, California

Angelina was walking along a road near her home when she was struck and killed by an 18-year-old driver in a pickup truck who was typing a text message.

Caleb Sorohan, 18, Georgia

Caleb had been texting with his friend while driving before his car veered into the opposing lane and collided head-on with a truck.

16% of all teen drivers involved in fatal crashes were distracted while driving. Help prevent the loss of more lives.

A personal message from Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood:

Distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic on America's roads, and teens are especially vulnerable because of their inexperience behind the wheel and, often, peer pressure. Behind the statistics are real families who have been devastated by these tragedies. The U.S. Department of Transportation is working to spread awareness of this serious problem and help communities establish appropriate legislation and enforcement efforts. Please join us in fighting for the lives of our young people.

... and Consumer Reports President, Jim Guest:

We know that educating people about the risk of distracted driving works. In a recent Consumer Reports survey, we found that two-thirds of the respondents who reduced or stopped such behaviors said they did so because of reading or hearing about the dangers. We will continue to fight for effective ways of combating this problem. But every voice counts. For the good of all our kids, help us spread the word.

For more information, go to:

DISTRACTION.GOV

ConsumerReports®

www.ConsumerReports.org/distracted

DISTRACTED DRIVING SHATTERS LIVES

IN A FLASH, YOU CAN LOSE IT ALL.

An action plan for parents and educators, from the U.S. Department of Transportation and Consumer Reports

A problem of focus

Teenagers are dying and being injured every day because too many drivers are focusing on using a handheld phone instead of on the road. That's why the U.S. Department of Transportation and Consumer Reports have joined together to help parents and educators raise awareness of this danger and reduce the tragedies. Here are the facts:

- Motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. Mile for mile, they are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers. And one in three teens who text say they have done so while driving.
- In 2009, almost 5,500 people were killed and almost a half million were injured in accidents related to distracted driving. That's 16 percent of all fatal crashes and 20 percent of all injury crashes for that year. And almost one in five of those deaths involved reports of a cell phone.
- A Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study revealed that physically dialing a phone while driving increases the risk of a crash as much as six times. Texting is riskier still, increasing the collision risk by 23 times.
- A University of Utah study found that the reaction time of a teen driving and talking on a cell phone is the same as that of a 70-year-old driver who's not using a phone.

Six steps you can take ...

1 Set a good example

Kids learn from their parents. Put down your phone while driving and only use it when you've safely pulled off the road. According to the Pew Research Center, 40 percent of teens 12 to 17 say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put themselves or others in danger.

2 Talk to your teen

Discuss the risks and responsibilities of driving, and the danger of dividing their attention between a cell phone and the road. Show them the statistics related to distracted driving. And urge them to talk to others; friends take care of friends.

3 Establish ground rules

Set up family rules about not texting or talking on a handheld cell phone while behind the wheel. Enforce the limits set by your state's graduated licensing program, if one exists, or create your own family policies.

4 Sign a pledge

Have your teen take action by agreeing to a family contract about wearing safety belts and not speeding, driving after drinking, or using a cell phone behind the wheel. Agree on penalties for violating the pledge, including paying for tickets or loss of driving privileges.

5 Educate yourself

Find out more about this tragic problem. View the information and resources available at *www.distraction.gov* and *www.ConsumerReports.org/distracted.* The more you know, the more you will understand the seriousness of the issue.

6 Spread the word

Get involved in educating and promoting safe driving in your community and through online social-media websites.Talk to friends, family, and coworkers. And support advocacy organizations such as the National Organizations for Youth Safety *(www.noys.org)* and FocusDriven *(www.focusdriven.org).*