

Teens Need To Put The Brakes On Road Distractions

(NAPSA)—According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, driver distraction accounts for a quarter of all automobile collisions—more than 1.5 million per year. In addition, teenage drivers are four times more likely to be involved in distraction-related collisions than any other age group.

A driving distraction is anything that takes full attention away from driving safely—adjusting the radio, eating and drinking, other passengers, using a cell phone and outside distractions such as billboards and friends in other vehicles.

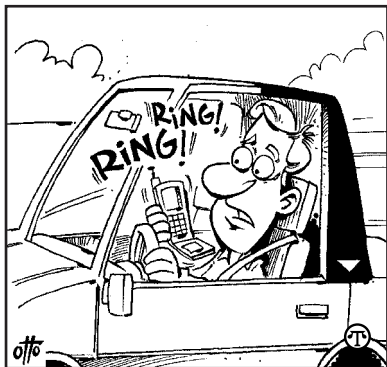
As parents often play an integral role in a teen's formative driving years—helping him/her practice behind the wheel, putting up money for a first car or insurance, etc.—they should also serve as role models for safety.

“Together with Cingular Wireless, we recommend that novice drivers not talk on the phone while driving,” says Scott Reinacher, chairman, National Troopers Coalition.

Cingular Wireless in partnership with the NTC recommends these expert tips:

- Wait until you come to a complete stop at a traffic light or stop sign before changing radio stations or CDs.
- When picking up fast food, take the time to eat inside the restaurant or take the food home. If you're traveling with someone, take turns eating and driving.
- Don't be a “rubbernecker.” Let your passengers do the sight-seeing for you.

“Chances are, you've armed your teen with a cell phone in case of emergencies or to let you know



When driving, let cellular phone calls go to voice mail or ask a passenger to answer your call.

when he or she is running late,” says Reinacher. “But before you hand it over, take a few minutes to talk with your new driver about how to use the phone safely.”

For example, Reinacher suggests, if your wireless phone rings, ask a passenger to answer it; if you are alone, let the call go to voice mail. If you must make or place a call, pull off the road, well away from traffic, into a safe, busy, well-lit area. Avoid stressful or emotional conversations while behind the wheel. “This is also good advice for experienced drivers,” says Reinacher.

These tips, along with others, are available as part of a NTC-endorsed program from Cingular Wireless. “Be Sensible: Don't drive yourself to distraction” is a teen program that features a video, educator's guide, educational wall poster and classroom activities to help students learn to stay focused on the road.

For more information on safe driving and the Be Sensible program, visit www.be-sensible.com.