

## Hang Up and Pay Attention!

Imagine you're in a car, being driven to football practice or gymnastics class or to the mall, and you see a car in front of you on the highway, weaving and veering at times into your lane. Your mom or dad or whoever is driving may flinch and yell to no avail as the other driver continues. The driver is most likely using a cell phone to text or talk or even do both. Cell phones are used everywhere in our society, but on the road they are deadly distractions and should be prohibited.

Cell phone drivers display behaviors that mimic the actions of drunk drivers. They speed up, slow down, weave, tailgate, and forget to use their signal lights. This type of dangerous, distracted driving has been the cause of many accidents and is one of the main reasons why our state of New York and other states have passed laws to address cell phone use while in the car.

Many studies have been done on the danger of using a cell phone while driving, with the most recent studies examining texting rather than talking. Drivers who are talking are less distracted than those who are texting, but both groups are more likely to have an accident. Even Oprah Winfrey devoted a show to the dangers of using cell phones while driving and asked her audience to make their cars "no phone zones" a couple of years ago. If a problem is widespread enough for a celebrity like Oprah to address it, then it is probably worth some of our attention.

Some states, including New York, allow hands-free use of cell phones. Some car manufacturers have also created integrated communication systems in their cars. These are only partial solutions. Using your hands to push buttons or scroll on the phone is part of the distraction, but distraction still exists when a driver is listening or talking and not paying full attention to the road ahead.

Lawmakers need to take a firm stand and prohibit all use of cell phones while a driver is driving. This goal, however, may never be reached. In the meantime, drivers themselves must take action. The American Automobile Association has always recommended that drivers pull off the road before using a cell phone. This is one simple step that everyone could act on tomorrow to make our roads safer. Another suggestion is for every driver simply to turn their phone off while driving and turn it back on when pulling into their destination. It only takes a few minutes after parking to listen to voice mails or to make a call yourself.

Cell phones can save your life in an emergency, but drivers have become much too casual in using their phones for every little thing. Drivers and passengers need to unite and, like Oprah has urged us, to make our cars "no phone zones."

**Key:**

Claim

Reasons

Evidence

Counterclaim

Rebuttal (the author's response to the counterclaims)

Call to action