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# Distracted driving: Multi-tasking behind wheel too dangerous

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By Marcella Gonsalves, Guest opinion

I think by now just about every Sacramento area resident has heard at least one radio ad discouraging them from texting while driving.

Bravo to the public health community and partners for recognizing and swiftly addressing this major concern in our very car-dependent state.

However, while there is a persistent no-text message, it seems like we have absolved talking on the phone (AKA distracted driving).

Drexel University's psychology department recently did a study that suggests texting while driving is a psychological distraction with measurable effects, even under the simplest (simulated) road conditions.

As the Executive MPH program at Drexel University Sacramento, I would like to bring a public health perspective on this issue regarding cell phone calling and other sorts of distractions while driving.

There are laws that permit talking with your hands-free device and highway signs that say "phone in one hand, ticket in the other." I interpret this message as: "Talk as much as you want while you're driving, but just don't have a phone in your hand."

I think our state laws and most folks are grossly ignoring that talking on a cell phone and any distraction whatsoever hinders our ability to navigate our 1,500-pound hunks of metal down the highway. Not to mention, multi-tasking in the car adds more stress to our already demanding lives.

If we want to protect ourselves while we are on the move, we need to simplify.

Perhaps we need to make our calls while parked at our office desks or in front of a cup of our favorite tea, not while we are flying down the freeway. After all, we can't truly have an eloquent and thoughtful conversation when we're trying to ignore the mullet-clad truck driver in the next lane, count out exact change for the tollbooth, and navigate through road construction.

How about we eat our meals with our families and friends at kitchen tables, not while we inch forward in bumper-to-bumper traffic. We just can't truly enjoy the way that food nourishes our body and people nourish our souls while we're buckled in and inhaling tiny particle matters (PM2.5).

We need to recognize the fact that multi-tasking actually makes us more stressed, less productive, and more prone to injury. We should abolish the idea that constant multi-tasking is the best medicine for an overloaded plate.

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