

## Is taking that cell call or text message worth the risk to someone else's life?

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November and December mark some of the heaviest traveling occasions of the year with Americans striving to be "home" with family during this major holiday period. A large proportion of these are car travelers and likely most bring their cell phones—and probably engage in activity hazardous to themselves and others by talking or texting while driving.

Fred Johnson, executive vice president and general manager of Farmers Telephone Cooperative in Rainsville, Alabama, poses a sobering "what if" to cell phone users on the road. What if a large and very readable message on your screen appeared when your cell phone rang stating, "Answering this call or reading this message may result in the loss of human life! Do you accept full responsibility for the loss of such life?" The driver must answer the question with a yes before picking up the call or viewing the incoming message.

Johnson writes that essentially saying yes and taking a cell phone call or text message while driving results in



an automobile accident every 21 seconds.

**"There are 1.5 million accidents a year because someone is willing to risk a human life for the sake of answering a cell phone call or reading a text message,"** wrote Johnson.

The Department of Justice reported in 2011 that there were 478,401 incidents of violent crime involving a firearm, with about two percent of that number resulting in a homicide.

**In 2015 there were some 1.5 million accidents resulting from cell phone or other electronic device usage while operating a motor vehicle.**

**Last year, of that 1.5 million total, 3,154 people died as the result of cell phone talk or texting while driving.**

That number is over three times the number of firearm-involved crimes in the United States, yet there is little mention of this huge problem

with cell phone usage while driving in news reports or political discussions.

"The temptation to answer a cell phone call or a text message while driving probably reaches almost every one of us. You don't have to be a bad person to make a bad decision. You just have to ignore an inconvenient reality.

"Really, how dangerous can it be to take a quick call while driving? Consider this. The simple matter that your brain is not physiologically capable of literal multitasking when concerned with cognitive response processes. Translated into plain English it means that when you pick up an electronic communication device you become impaired," stresses Johnson.

Just how impaired can a cell phone call or text leave a motorist?

A driver distracted by a cell phone call or text is **six times more likely** to be involved in an accident than a person with a blood alcohol level at 0.08—the legal limit in Alabama!

"So, my friends, unless you can say with a clear conscience that you see no problem with someone driving at a level of impairment six times greater than the DUI

(See **TEXTING**, Page 2)

PAGE 1  
ACCIDENT RISK  
SIX TIMES GREATER  
FOR TEXTING DRIVERS  
PAGE 2  
LIFELINE PROGRAM  
CHANGES EFFECTIVE  
THIS MONTH

ADD YOUR NUMBER  
TO DO NOT CALL NA-  
TIONAL REGISTRY

### Draft payment discount

WT Services Hereford/Bushland and Friona/Bovina customers can get a one percent discount by paying their bill by bank draft.

Customers authorizing draft payment agree to have their bank account drafted for the outstanding balance on their account with WT Services. Drafts will occur between the 20th and 23rd of each month.

To arrange for payment of your WT Services bill via bank draft and net the one percent savings, contact the WT Services office in Friona or Hereford to obtain the necessary authorization form.



# Lifeline Program adding changes effective this month

Important changes to Lifeline, the federal program designed to help low-income Americans pay for vital telecommunications services, go into effect this month.

Effective December 2, 2016, for new subscribers, eligibility for Lifeline will be limited to the following criteria:

- SNAP (Food Stamps)
- Medicaid
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- The Veteran's Pension or Survivor's Pension benefit

Consumers at or below 135 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines and those who qualified previously through

## Texting is driving impaired...from Page 1

level, I would ignore that call or text until you are stopped and off the road."

Johnson spends a great amount of time on the road each year, and his work demands a response to 50-70 calls, messages and e-mails each day.

"I must spend a considerable amount of time behind the wheel each day. While there, each time my cell phone chirps, I must force myself to answer the question as to whether taking the call or message is worth putting your own or someone else's life or health at risk."

As a driver on the holiday roads, or at any time, what will YOUR answer be?

Stay alert to stay alive. Drive now. Talk or text later.

any of the Tribal criteria will continue to be eligible for a Lifeline Program benefit.

To find out whether you qualify for Lifeline assistance customers must fill out standard forms, available at your local telephone company's office, as mandated by the Federal or State government. Your telephone company is not responsible for determining who qualifies for these programs or who receives assistance. Customers must

meet specific criteria in order to obtain assistance with their local telephone service, and qualifying is dependent on government-established guidelines.

To qualify for Lifeline credit, each customer must apply and provide proof that he/she or a household member for whom he/she is financially responsible, participates in at least one of the programs listed, or that the customer meets the income-based

requirements. Additional eligibility requirements may also apply.

Consumers are allowed only one Lifeline program benefit per household. Lifeline can only be used for one source of communication—landline or cell phone.

Contact your telephone company to apply for this assistance. More details about the new Lifeline program will be provided as they become available.

## Add your number to Do Not Call Registry

Telemarketing calls are about as ever-present—and as welcome—as taxes. Unlike taxes, at least you can do something in some cases.

The Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have a National Do Not Call Registry in place that can help to reduce the number of telemarketing calls that you receive at your residence or on your cell phone.

It's easy to add your number to the Do Not Call Registry.

You can register online at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov) or call 888-382-1222 from the telephone number that you wish to register.

For the hearing impaired the TTY number is 866-290-4236.

Once you have registered, telemarketers have 31 days to stop calling your number. You can register up to three non-business telephone

numbers for the Do Not Call Registry.

You can also register cell phones. There is not a separate registry for cell phones.

Once you register a number, it will remain on the list permanently unless you disconnect the number or choose to remove it.

Businesses that you already have a relationship with, political organizations, charities, and telephone surveyors—for better or worse—are exempt from the Do Not Call Registry and may still be able to call your number.

However, they are not supposed to be able to call again once you've asked them not to.

Whether or not you are listed on the National Do Not Call Registry, strict Federal Trade Commission rules make it illegal for a telemarketer to:

- Call before 8 a.m.

- Threaten, intimidate or harass you.

- Call again after you have asked them not to.

Local businesses are also included under the Do Not Call regulations.

Local businesses that make calls to customers or potential customers are covered by the same Do Not Call Registry rules.

For more information about the National Do Not Call regulations, interested parties can visit the National Do Not Call registry at [www.telemarketing.donotcall.gov](http://www.telemarketing.donotcall.gov) where you can find the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission rules governing telemarketing and telephone solicitation at 47 C.F.R. 64.1200 and 16 C.F.R. Part 310, respectively.

The Do Not Call initiative requires telephone service providers to notify customers of the National Do Not Call rules and regulations.