

PREPARED REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
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We're here today to talk about the dangers of texting and driving, but before I do, I want to be clear that mobile communications have changed our lives for the better in many profound, important ways.

Mobile phones are the most widely adopted technology in human history because of the value they provide.

In the U.S., there are more connected mobile phones than there are people – the majority of which are now smartphones.

Most of us can't imagine life without our mobile phone.

We rely on them to stay connected to family, friends and work, to stay informed, to participate in our democracy.

With the apps revolution, we now also use our phones in ways few could have imagined 5 years ago – whether it's a health care app to help a diabetic check her insulin levels, an education app to help kids with their schoolwork, or an energy app to help manage the smart appliances in your home.

These mobile marvels not only improve our lives, they improve our economy.

The U.S. has regained the global lead in mobile.

Mobile innovation has created nearly 1.6 million U.S. jobs over the past 5 years.

And all indications are that this sector will only continue to grow. New technological innovations like mobile communications are creating new opportunities.

But they also are creating new challenges.

Texting and driving is one of those challenges. And a very, very serious one.

You've heard the numbers.

People who drive while texting are 23 times more likely to have an accident than a non-distracted driver.

An estimated 160,000 accidents were caused by texting and driving in 2010, and 11 percent of drivers aged 18 to 20 who were involved in an automobile accident and survived admitted they were sending or receiving texts when they crashed.

More than 3,092 people lost their lives in 2010 as a result of distracted driving.

More than 3,000 people. That's more than 51 city buses full of people.

Text messaging allows people to stay in touch anytime, anywhere.

But anytime, anywhere should not extend to when you're behind the wheel.

These deaths and injuries are tragic and preventable.

How do we stop them?

Three things.

First, let's change the laws.

President Obama has made combatting distracted driving a national priority.

In 2009 he issued an Executive Order banning federal employees from texting while driving.

At the FCC, consistent with President Obama's Executive Order on distracted driving, we've made it official agency policy to prohibit employees from texting while driving on the job and when using government vehicles.

And thanks to the leadership of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, the number of states with distracted driving laws on the books has more than doubled, from 18 states in 2009 to 39 states today.

Let's convince the remaining 11 states to make it unanimous.

Second, this problem that sprang from technology requires technological solutions.

In 2009, I challenged our nation's innovators and entrepreneurs to develop technological tools and services to mitigate the problem of distracted driving.

At the FCC, we convened a workshop to spur action.

And we're beginning to see a wave of innovation.

Answering the challenge, wireless carriers, handset designers, software developers and automobile manufacturers are developing technological tools and services to decrease distractions to help keep our roads safe, some of which are operational already, with more to come.

AT&T just launched a new mobile application called "DriveMode" that prevents incoming telephone calls or text messaging while driving, while sending auto-reply notifications to anyone trying to contact the driver.

Sprint and T-Mobile also offer services that automatically disable text messaging when a cell phone is moving at car-like speeds.

Other new apps that block texting or web surfing when a phone is in motion -- such as iZup, tXtBlocker, ZoomSafer and CellSafety -- are available for download now.

New products also aim to minimize in-car distractions by taking devices out of the hands of drivers.

Products such as Apple's Siri, Samsung's Galaxy and a mobile app called Vlingo enable consumers to interact with their smartphones using only their voice.

I encourage innovators to develop new, creative solutions that build on this progress. And I encourage drivers to use these solutions.

The lives that are saved could be our parents', our children's, our friends'.

Third, and most important, we need to change social norms around texting and driving.

Who here watches Mad Men?

I can't even begin to remember how many times Don Draper – the show's main character – has gotten behind the wheel when he's three sheets to the wind.

People who are familiar with the show know how ridiculous those scenes seem.

What's ridiculous is that it was socially acceptable for people to do this.

We need to get to the point where watching somebody text and drive seems just as outrageous and anachronistic as seeing Don Draper downing a bottle of whisky during his evening commute.

Laws and technology are necessary but not sufficient.

We need social norms to change.

We need to make texting and driving as unacceptable as drunk driving.

Changing social norms starts with better public education.

The FCC, along with the Department of Transportation and other government agencies, has been working to educate the public about the dangers of texting and driving through every means we can think of.

We have encouraged the wireless industry to follow suit, and they have.

A growing number of drivers are getting the message.

An encouraging new trend among some teen drivers is having a "designated texter" in the vehicle when they go out. Let's get all drivers on board.

Another important and very encouraging development is AT&T's new "It Can Wait" initiative.

This effort is about action as well as education.

It's my pleasure to stand with Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson, and George Washington University President Steven Knapp and call on all Americans to pledge never to text and drive.

You can do this at ItCanWait.org.

I've taken the pledge, and then asked every employee at the FCC to do the same.

It took some time to get the message about drinking and driving to sink in.

In the United States, the number of drunk driving deaths is less than half what is used to be, even as our population has grown.

It took laws, ads, and a widespread change in social norms.

It took a lot of work, and there's more to do to further reduce drunk driving.

We need to tackle texting and driving with the same urgency and purpose.
Texting and driving can wait.

Tackling this issue can't.