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### Health District Warns of Distracted Driving Risks

Did you know that distracted driving is the number one killer of teenagers in the United States? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 15 people are killed each day and more than 1,200 people are injured in crashes that were reported to involve a distracted driver. The month of April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the Central Connecticut Health District is encouraging all residents to avoid distractions while driving.

Distracted driving is defined as any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger and bystander safety. According to the CDC, there are three different types of distraction: visual, manual and cognitive. Visual distractions force the driver to take their eyes off the road for any period of time. Manual distractions force the driver to take their hands off the wheel for any period of time. Cognitive distractions involve the driver taking their mind off of driving. These types of distractions include but are not limited to: texting, using a cell phone or smart phone, eating and drinking, talking to passengers, grooming, reading (including maps), using a navigation system, watching a video and adjusting a radio, CD player or MP3 player.

In 2009, more than 5,400 people died in crashes that were reported to involve a distracted driver and about 448,000 people were injured. In fact, the proportion of drivers reportedly distracted at the time of a fatal crash has increased from 7 percent in 2005 to 11 percent in 2009.