

★ ★ ★ ★ Safety Culture

Majority of Motorists Feel Less Safe Due to Distracted Driving

*Eighty-eight Percent Rated Texting or E-mailing a Very Serious Threat,
Ranking Higher than the Threat of Drunk Driving*

Washington, D.C. – Fifty-two percent of drivers said they feel less safe on the roads now than they did five years ago, according to the third-annual [2010 Traffic Safety Culture Index](#) released today by the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#). The leading reason cited by American drivers was distracted driving, with 88 percent of motorists rating drivers who text and email as a very serious threat to their safety.

“As mobile technology evolves at a breakneck pace, more and more people rightly fear and recognize that distracted driving – texting, e-mails, phone calls and more – is a growing threat on the road. But, unfortunately, this new data confirms the “Do as I say, not as I do” attitude is prevalent throughout much of the driving public,” said AAA Foundation President and CEO [Peter Kissinger](#). The study showed that the majority of drivers (62 percent) feel that talking on a cell phone is a very serious threat to safety, but they do not always behave accordingly or believe that others share these views. In fact, nearly 70 percent of those surveyed admitted to talking on their phones and 24 percent said they read or sent text messages or emails while driving in the previous month. To help change the current culture of complacency, the AAA Foundation and AAA are holding their second annual [Heads Up Driving Week](#), from September 26-October 2, to encourage drivers to drive distraction-free.

“Unlike the social stigma surrounding drinking and driving, driving while texting, emailing or talking on the phone aren’t perceived as egregious behaviors despite overwhelming scientific evidence of the serious crash risk these behaviors pose,” said Kissinger. “This year’s *Traffic Safety Culture Index* helps identify crucial disconnects between public perceptions and behaviors, an important step in helping the public understand the true risks of their actions.”

Traffic safety touches Americans’ lives with serious consequences. Half of survey respondents report having been involved in a serious crash, having had a friend or relative injured or killed in a crash, or both. In an effort to spark the dialogue about improving our safety culture and working toward the goal of zero deaths on our nation’s

Car crashes rank among the leading causes of death in the United States.



highways, the AAA Foundation launched its third-annual survey of the driving public on a wide variety of issues. Following are highlights from the *2010 Traffic Safety Culture Index*:

- Motorists rated distracted driving behaviors as some of the most serious threats to their safety, yet many admitted to distracted behaviors like talking on the cell phone or texting or e-mailing while driving
 - Nearly 90 percent identify texting or e-mailing while driving as a very serious threat and 80 percent would support a law banning it
 - Nine out of ten people personally consider texting or emailing while driving unacceptable and two-thirds indicated that they would lose some respect for a friend who they saw engaging in those activities while driving
 - **However**, nearly a quarter of all those surveyed said they had read or sent a text or e-mail while driving in the last month
 - Two-thirds report talking on a cell phone while driving as a very serious threat and nearly half would support a law banning use of any phone while driving
 - **However**, nearly 70 percent of all those surveyed admitted talking on phone while driving in the past month

“Motor vehicle crashes suddenly, prematurely and violently end the lives of tens of thousands of Americans each year – killing more of our children, teens and young adults than any other single cause,” continued Kissinger. “Using a phone while driving increases your risk of being in a crash fourfold due to the physical, visual and mental distractions. As a society, we no longer can let distraction kill.”

As part of AAA’s commitment to improving highway safety for its members and all road users, the auto club launched a legislative campaign in 2009 to ban texting while driving in all 50 states. “AAA’s legislative campaign has helped lead 11 more states to enact laws against this risky driving behavior this year, bringing the total to 30 states and the District of Columbia,” said AAA President and CEO [Robert L. Darbelnet](#). “But the AAA Foundation’s research points to the continued work needed to convince motorists to not engage in behavior that puts themselves, their passengers and others at risk.”

The AAA Foundation continues to shed light on the lack of American traffic safety culture and is working to build a social climate in which traffic safety is highly valued and rigorously pursued. Given the preventable nature of the majority of traffic deaths, the AAA Foundation implores drivers to stay off the phone, buckle up, don’t drink and drive, obey the speed limit and arrive alive. For more information, visit www.AAAFoundation.org.

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Established in 1947 by AAA, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety is an independent, publicly funded, 501(c)(3) charitable research and educational organization. The AAA Foundation’s mission is to prevent traffic deaths and injuries by conducting research into their causes and by educating the public about strategies to prevent crashes and reduce injuries when they do occur.

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety commissioned Abt SRBI Inc. to conduct a random sample telephone survey of 2,000 U.S. adults in English and in Spanish from May 11, 2010 through June 7, 2010. The survey has a margin of error of 2.9 percentage points.