

Driving requires total concentration

Did you know that "distracted driving" was the 2009 phrase of the year according to Webster's Dictionary? But unfortunately, this is no passing fad. Distracted driving has become a trend with deadly, real consequences.

It's time to turn this trend into a message of awareness. April was National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the Fort Sill Directorate of Emergency Services is working to make drivers alert to the dangers.

For people who believe they can talk on their phone, text, apply make-up or do any other activity while driving, here's a crash course in reality from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

— In 2009, nearly 5,500 people were killed and a half million more injured in distracted driving crashes.

— Twenty percent of injury crashes in 2009 involved reports of distracted driving.

— Younger, inexperienced

drivers under age 20 have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.

In addition to those statistics, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety officials stated drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to be involved in a serious crash.

While those numbers may sound like just statistics, they're anything but. They could be parents, children, neighbors and friends from Fort Sill. There are too many sad tales of deaths and injuries that could have been prevented had drivers paid attention to the road instead of someone or something else.

So, why do so many people participate in this dangerous behavior? With more technology now than ever, driver distractions have risen to unprecedented levels. We live in a world where people expect instant, real-time information 24 hours a day. Those desires don't stop



Did you know?

By Col. Paul Hossenlopp
Fort Sill Garrison commander

just because they get behind the wheel. Drivers simply do not realize — or choose to ignore — the danger they create when they take their eyes off the road, their hands off the wheel and their focus off driving.

Some people say, "I can do two things at once. I've memorized where the numbers are on my phone, so I don't have to look." Or, "Sending or reading one text is pretty quick — that should be OK." They couldn't be more wrong.

For those who think they can do two things at once, think about this: According to a study by Carnegie Mellon, driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by

37 percent. Can you really afford to lose that much brainpower? Driving is an activity that requires your full attention and focus to keep yourself and others safe.

Yes, this is a national problem, and it affects us in Oklahoma. No one is immune from the dangers of distracted driving. Throughout April, Fort Sill police officers conducted a high visibility law enforcement effort encouraging drivers to avoid unnecessary distractions.

Fort Sill Supplement 1 to Army Regulation 190-5 states:

1. In accordance with 32 CFR Section 634.25, using hand-held cell phones while driving a U.S. government

vehicle or privately-owned vehicle on Fort Sill is prohibited. This prohibition applies to the driver of the vehicle only and shall not be enforced against any passenger in or on the vehicle. A driver who wants to use a hand-held cell phone must move the vehicle safely off or to the side of the road and completely stop out of the way of moving traffic before using a cell phone. The following uses are permissible:

— When the driver uses a hands-free cell telephone, which allows the user to communicate without the use of either hand, so long as the hands-free cell phone does not involve the use of a headset that covers both ears.

— When operating an authorized emergency or law enforcement vehicle in the performance of official duties.

(2) This prohibition applies to hand-held cell phones only and is not applicable to

microphones or radios typically used in cabs and authorized emergency vehicles. A violation of this prohibition may result in a \$50 fine and/or 30 days in jail as decided by the U.S. magistrate.

The use of cell phones off-post is subject to the same restrictions as the use of cell phones on Fort Sill. A violation of the off-post prohibition on the use of hand-held cell phones may result in adverse administrative action (reprimand, assessment of points, loss of on-post driving privileges or other actions) in accordance with AR 190-5, paragraph 4-2d.

Officers will ticket and fine drivers they catch violating these laws, emphasizing to all drivers that their focus needs to be on the road.

Commit to stop driving distracted. Remember: One text or call could wreck it all.

Soldiers get teary-eyed during training

Story, photo
By Sgt. Nathaniel Foster
75th Fires Brigade PAO

Soldiers in 3rd Battalion, 13th Field Artillery "Red Dragons" appeared from the gas chamber with runny noses, watery eyes and burning throats during training here April 25.

The battalion's goal was to teach Soldiers how to react to chemical and biological attacks by using their issued chemical warfare equipment.

"It was great training," said Staff Sgt. Ted Hannon, 3-13th FA section chief. "If you do not use your protective mask often then Soldiers start to

lose their (nuclear, biological and chemical) skills."

Soldiers performed calisthenics to increase their heart rate, before going inside the chamber. First, the Soldiers entered the chamber with their protective masks on. The Soldiers then broke their seals, and revealed their masks to test their mask readiness.

Once that was completed, they moved to a white line inside the chamber and removed their mask for approximately one minute before exiting the chamber.

The tear gas caused a burning sensation of the eyes, nose, and mouth, but had no lasting effects once the

Soldiers were removed from the contaminated area. After the Soldiers came out of the chamber, they walked around with their arms out, which helped expose their skin to the air and remove any remains of the contaminant.

"It was a good experience for everyone," said Pfc. Zachary Lull. "Coming out to the chamber helps the Soldiers build confidence in themselves and their equipment."

The training gave Soldiers a reminder of the symptoms they would experience in a chemical or biological attack. Many of the "Red Dragon" Soldiers said the gas chamber was not as bad as they had anticipated.



Staff Sgt. Ted Hannon, 3rd Battalion, 13th Field Artillery section chief with 3rd Battalion exits the C/S chamber after experiencing the effects of tear gas April 25 at Fort Sill.

Briefs

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Clinics temporarily move

Reynolds Army Community Hospital will

temporarily relocate two clinics in May because of renovations. The Physical Therapy clinic will move to Bldg. 2776 Ringgold Road, between Currie and Craig Roads May 23. The PT clinic will be closed from May 18 through 22. The

Chiropractic Clinic has relocated to the 3rd floor of RACH, Room 3E159, on the west side of the hospital. Both clinics will move back to the Physical Therapy section once renovations are completed in January.

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