

'No Texting / Driving Day' Sept. 19

by Gerald Scott

A national effort to curb the unsafe "texting and driving" phenomenon is gaining steam.

It seems that cellular provider AT&T is organizing what is called "No Text On Board - Pledge Day," scheduled for Sept. 19.

The primary reason is clear - National Safety Council statistics cited by AT&T show an alarming number of car accidents caused by texting while driving. Of course, the secondary reason for a wireless provider like AT&T is that they don't want their cell phones and services legislated out of domestic cars by reactionary state capitols nationwide.

The idea of "No Text Day" is to make a commitment to not text on the day - but never again after that, too.

More than 100,000 times each year, an automobile crashes and people are injured or die while a driver was texting and driving, said AT&T Chairman & CEO Randall Stephenson, citing statistics from the National Safety Council. "Our goal is to save lives," Stephenson said. "I hear from far too many people whose lives have been forever changed by a 'texting-while-driving' accident, and together, we want to spread the word about how deadly a single text can be. Texting and driving should be as unacceptable as drinking and driving."

AT&T, its employees and other supporters of the campaign are calling on all drivers to go to www.itcanwait.com to take the no-texting-and-driving pledge, and then share their promise with others via Twitter and Facebook.

The online pledge effort is part of the company's public awareness campaign aimed directly at stopping the dangerous practice of texting while driving.

Meanwhile, the campaign to celebrate this issue on Sept. 19

appears to be gaining some steam nationally.

Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League in New York, said, "African-Americans have a high rate of wireless device usage. African-American teenagers, in particular, use text messaging as an essential form of communication. Many are unaware of the multitude of consequences that can result from sending a text message from behind the wheel of a car.

"The National Urban League is committed to supporting AT&T's nationwide effort to raise awareness about the dangers of texting while driving. We strongly recommend that all of our members take the pledge never again to text and drive during 'No Text on Board - Pledge Day,' on Sept. 19.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has also weighed in on this auto safety topic.

"Distracted driving is an epidemic on our roadways, and we need people all across America to take action in their communities to help put a stop to it," LaHood said. "I applaud AT&T for taking on the issue with the 'It Can Wait' campaign, and I thank them for helping to spread the word that no text or e-mail (sent from a moving car) is worth the risk."

AT&T first began its "It Can Wait" campaign discouraging texting and driving back in 2009. A documentary film on the corresponding Website describing the families that have been devastated by "texting and driving" accidents, including deaths and injuries, has already been viewed over 3 million times.

Reminder: Navy Week Is Hot
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