

Devices claim they'll help you drive safely while texting, on the phone

October 7 2010, By Mark W. Smith

Can adding new layers of technology really fix a problem created by technology?

Software developers and hardware makers are rushing to help people stay connected via their phones while driving, even as states ban driving and [texting](#) or talking on the phone without a hands-free device.

"Technology doesn't typically go backward. It's like Pandora's Box: Once someone knows they can do something, it's difficult to get them to stop doing it," said Chris Hassett, CEO of Boston-based AdelaVoice, which just released StartTalking, a smartphone app that allows texting using only voice commands.

A study released last week by the Highway Loss Data Institute found no decrease in crashes in California, Louisiana, Minnesota and Washington after those states approved driving-while-texting bans.

"Teenagers and others are now holding their phone in awkward positions so they don't get ticketed while they do the same dangerous behavior," Hassett said.

Michigan's ban on texting while driving went into effect July 1 and carries a \$100 fine for a first offense.

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, a fierce proponent of legislation to limit distracted driving, slammed the Highway Loss Data

Institute study, calling it misleading.

"We have a national law against drunk driving. People are also required to wear seat belts. But if the number of fatalities in a state goes up one year, would it now pass as research to say that seat belt and anti-drunk driving laws are to blame?" LaHood wrote on his official blog.

Yes, it's ironic to add technology to the car to make technology less distracting. But here are some of the slickest solutions that, if used properly, could help keep you safer on the road.

STARTTALKING

This Android-based smartphone app touts itself as the world's first 100 percent eyes- and hands-free texting application.

Drivers turn on the application before starting the car and can control texting functions -- including drafting a new message -- through voice commands.

And, unlike other similar applications, it can run in the background without forcing the phone's display to be illuminated, saving on crucial battery life.

The app also allows you to send replies as audio recordings. An iPhone version is planned for the first quarter of 2011.

www.starttalking.com

Cost: Free

BLUEANT Q2 SMART BLUETOOTH HEADSET

This sleek Bluetooth headset announces the caller's name when you get an incoming call so you don't have to pick up your phone to know who is calling. Answer with a click on the headset, which rests comfortably in your ear.

This headset also has a dedicated smartphone app -- Vlingo -- that can read incoming text messages and e-mails into your ear as you're driving. While the app is free to download, unlocking those features will cost you \$10.

Vlingo is available for Android, iPhone, BlackBerry and Nokia platforms.

The headset and app also allow you to use voice commands while driving to update your Facebook status or call a specific contact in your address book.

www.myblueant.com

Cost: \$129.99

SMS REPLIER

This [smartphone](#) app offers a way to send automated replies to your contacts while your car is moving, kicking in automatically when you reach 15 m.p.h.

Incoming callers and texters receive an automated reply such as: "I'm [driving](#) right now, can I call you back when I'm off the road?" You can also customize replies to tell people you're at work, in class, etc.

For safety reasons, you can also define a set group of five contacts that will bypass the auto-reply and allow your phone to ring (your child's

school, for example).

SMS Replier is available for Android, BlackBerry and Windows Mobile smartphones. iPhone and Palm versions are expected soon.

www.smsreplier.com

Cost: \$19.95

CELLSAFETY

Marketed toward parents of teens, this solution completely disables a phone's texting feature while it's in motion.

The [app](#) will also alert the parent instantly if a child exceeds the speed limit.

This feature is part of a suite of controls that includes GPS tracking, alerts when your child's phone leaves a defined perimeter and monitors text messages.

CellSafety is available on [Android](#), BlackBerry and Nokia phones.

www.websafety.com

Cost: \$9.99 a month per cell phone; family pack available for \$39.99.

(c) 2010, Detroit Free Press.

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Citation: Devices claim they'll help you drive safely while texting, on the phone (2010, October 7) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-10-devices-theyll-safely-texting.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.