Distracted Driving - Is It Really an Issue?

It has been five years since Canadian provinces started to implement laws for distracted driving. People were beginning to admit that using a mobile device on the road caused major attention issues when driving. Unfortunately, that understated awareness was not enough to prevent the hundreds of fatalities in Canada alone that were the result of inattentive drivers. Still, today, drivers are not quick to discern that texting while driving is a threat to their own safety and that of others on the road. The seriousness and relevance of distracted driving needs to be recognized, laws need to be improved, and those laws need to be strongly enforced in order to protect everyone.

Even though distracted driving is a known cause of vehicle collisions, some people disregard the dangers and cultivate a habit of using their cellular device while driving. Perhaps their nonchalant attitude towards this problem is because they don't realize the consequences of distracted driving. When they are presented with a ticket for texting or calling while driving, some drivers claim the punishment is too severe. Others view the laws for distracted driving as unnecessary and trust themselves to maintain focus and attention on the road while attending to their calls. These beliefs, however, are debatable.

In contrast to those views, the police force believes that distracted driving is possibly becoming more dangerous than driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. And with over 4000 convictions in 2013, it is also much more common. This fact calls the attention of the provincial governments into providing stricter laws for distracted driving. Also, a driver who is texting is twenty-three times more likely to be involved in an accident. This is because someone looking down at their phone for a mere five seconds will have traveled 100 yards at highway speed. Drivers that are distracted in this way are almost completely inattentive to their driving. Thus, it is easy to see why distractions while driving need to be eliminated.

Therefore, because distracted driving is so dangerous, there is a need to punish those who practice it and enforce the laws pertaining to preoccupied drivers. This year, 2014, saw many increases in ticket costs for distracted driving and other new consequence such as vehicle impoundment. For example, drivers in Ontario that are caught using their cell phones while behind the wheel will be charged $1000.00, starting this Fall. This increase in payment will hopefully cause drivers to rethink their choice to text or call while driving. However, other provinces are still only charging distracted drivers a few hundred dollars for their infractions. In the meantime, the general public needs to be made aware of the increasing seriousness of distracted driving, and of the consequences.

Unquestionably, a distracted driver is a threat to the themselves and those around them. Because people are unwilling to simply accept this as a fact, laws need to be in place, and enforced, to prevent accidents caused by distracted driving. Provincial governments need to raise awareness, perhaps through commercials or campaigns, about the hazards of using a phone when driving. Then, citizens can be held more accountable for their actions while driving by means of stricter and improved laws relating to distracted driving. These laws need to be initiated, and drivers need to obey them, for our roads and our people to be safe.