

news & notes

CELL PHONES DISTRACT

Drivers are far more distracted by talking on a cell phone than by conversing with a passenger in an automobile. That's a conclusion of a new study by University of Utah psychologists.

The study, which used a sophisticated driving simulator, found that drivers on cell phones drift out of their lanes and miss exits more frequently than drivers talking with someone in the car. The findings were published in a recent issue of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*.

"The passenger adds a second set of eyes, and helps the driver navigate and reminds them where to go," said co-author David Strayer. Previous studies by the Utah scientists found that hands-free phones were just as distracting as hand-held models because the conversation is the biggest distraction. They conclude that drivers talking on cell phones are as impaired as those with the 0.08 percent blood-alcohol level that defines drunk driving in most states.

WINTER WORDS OF WISDOM

A snowy winter precludes a bumper harvest.

—Chinese proverb

In the depths of winter I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer.

—Albert Camus

A lot of people like snow. I find it to be an unnecessary freezing of water.

—Carl Reiner



November 2009

Quit Smoking Today!

You can do it

Every year since 1977, when the American Cancer Society (ACS – www.cancer.org) turned a California initiative into a nationwide event, the third Thursday in November has been the **Great American Smokeout**. For more than 30 years this event has inspired and equipped thousands of smokers to quit, and has also helped create changes in societal attitudes and policies, as evidenced by legal bans on smoking in workplaces and public facilities, increased taxes on cigarettes, limited tobacco advertising, and programs to discourage teen smokers.

Why are these changes so important? Because the truth is that cigarettes are a toxic waste dump.

In addition to addictive nicotine, cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, some of which are used in arsenic, insecticides, rat poison, and wood varnish! According to the 2004 U.S. Surgeon General's report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking on the Human Body*, smoking can damage virtually every organ of your body.

So you know that smoking is a grave hazard to your health. But how do you quit?

Several government agencies have combined their resources to create www.smokefree.gov, which is full of resources to help you quit. The online guide outlines these four steps—along with practical methods for accomplishing each:

1. Thinking about quitting
2. Preparing to quit
3. Quitting
4. Staying quit

Visit the site for more detailed instructions as well as for instant messaging support and local resource information.

You can also call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) for Quitlines in your state.



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HELP CO-WORKERS QUIT SMOKING!

If you have co-workers who are trying to kick the habit during the **Great American Smokeout this November**, do what you can to help. Here's why:

1. **You'll improve your own health.** The 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's report, *Secondhand Smoke: What it Means to You*, states that secondhand smoke can use lung cancer, heart disease, and elevated cholesterol levels.
2. **You'll improve working conditions.** New nonsmokers won't be absent as much because of smoking-related illnesses. And when on the job, they won't be taking smoking breaks.

How can you help a co-worker quit?

- Cheerlead the decision to quit.
- Be patient if they're irritable.
- Allow them to vent their frustrations. Don't take it personally.
- Be available to spend time with them in smoke-free environments.
- Invite them to smoke-free activities, such as mini-golf or a movie, to help them keep busy.

AMERICAN DIABETES MONTH

Help your kids develop good habits and lower their risk for diabetes by letting them use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) interactive website for children called "The Eagle's Nest" at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/eagle/index.html>.



Diabetes Is on the Rise ...

And many Americans don't know they have it

November is **American Diabetes Month**, a perfect time to get more informed about this disease, in which the body either doesn't produce insulin or doesn't recognize it. Insulin is a hormone that helps convert sugar, starches, and other foods into energy. Most people who have diabetes have other problems, such as being overweight, having high blood pressure, or having high cholesterol. Hence, people with diabetes are generally at risk of developing heart disease or stroke.

The American Diabetes Association (www.diabetes.org) says that 54 million Americans have pre-diabetes—and many don't know it. The good news is that once they find out, they can make lifestyle changes to delay or prevent diabetes.

What You Can Do

First, find out if you are at risk for developing diabetes by taking the diabetes risk assessment under **news & notes**. Also ask your health professional about having a fasting plasma glucose test or an oral glucose tolerance test. If you are diagnosed with pre-diabetes, take these steps:

- Get moderate exercise 30 minutes 5 days a week.
- Lose 5 percent to 7 percent of your weight if you are overweight.
- Eat low-calorie, low-fat foods.
- Visit the National Diabetes Education Program's (NDEP) Small Steps, Big Rewards, Prevent Type 2 Diabetes website for more details: www.ndep.nih.gov/campaigns/SmallSteps/SmallSteps_overview.htm.

WINTER WONDERLAND ...

... or winter hazard trap?

Winter Hazard Awareness Week is held every November to remind Americans to follow winter safety tips. For example, preventing slips and falls is a major concern when outdoor surfaces are wet or icy and slippery under foot.

Take these steps to keep your steps secure in slippery conditions:

- **Wear appropriate footwear** with nonslip soles on wet, icy, or snowy days.
- **Take extra care when walking on wet, icy, or snow-covered walkways.** Walk slowly and slide your feet on slippery surfaces. Avoid turning sharply when on a slippery surface.
- **Hold onto the railing** when using outdoor stairways.
- **Be especially careful when carrying packages, equipment, and materials.**
- **Wipe your feet when entering a building** so that your wet soles won't cause you to slip on indoor flooring.
- **Limit your injuries if you slip** and start to fall by bending your elbows and knees and using your legs and arms to absorb the fall. Or roll into the fall, if that's more appropriate.