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While eating more fruits and vegetables and parking as far away from the supermarket as possible will help improve your health in 2015, here's a resolution that can impact the lives of others, as well as your own life. Make a resolution in 2015 to put down the phone when you are driving and to not drive distracted! While all notions of self-improvement have their value, driving is one area where our actions can affect not only ourselves but other drivers and passengers on the road. Motor vehicle crashes continue to take their toll. According to the Texas Department of Transporta-

tion, in 2013 there was an increase in the number of crashes caused by distracted driving – especially fatal crashes caused by cell phone use.

Cell phones are a major distraction, but not the only distraction to drivers. Adjusting radios and GPS devices, loose pets, eating in the vehicle, and applying makeup are just some of the other distractions in your car. However, research shows that texting is among the most dangerous forms of distracted driving. Sending or reading an average text takes drivers' eyes off the road for 4-5 seconds. That

means at 55 miles per hour, a texting driver would travel the length of a football field without looking at the road – as if blindfolded! That's something none of us would consciously consider doing! Any time you take your hands off the wheel, your eyes off the road, and especially your mind off your driving, you put yourself, your passengers, and others on the road at risk.

"Making a resolution to not drive distracted in 2015 can very well mean saving a life!" said Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agent, Jymann Davis. Some of the lead-

ing causes of traffic deaths are distracted driving, impaired driving, and people not wearing seat belts. Resolve to give driving your full attention, and protect yourself and others on the road. Although young drivers are at greatest risk from distraction, parents and other adults should set the example by not using a cell phone in the car.

Follow the Governors Highway Safety Association's tips to prevent distracted driving (<http://www.ghsa.org>):

- **Turn it off and stow it.** Turn your phone off or switch it to silent mode before you get in the car. Then stow it away so that it's out of reach.
- **Spread the word.** Record a message on your phone that tells callers you're driving and will get back to them when you're off the road, or sign up for a service that offers this feature.
- **Pull over.** If you need to make a call, first pull over to a safe area.
- **Use your passengers.** Ask a passenger to make the call or respond to a text for you.
- **X the text.** Don't ever text and drive, surf the web, or read your email while driving. It's dangerous and against the law in most states. Even voice-to-text isn't risk-free.
- **Prepare.** If using a GPS de-

vice, enter your destination before you start to drive. If you prefer a map or written directions, review them in advance. If you need help while driving, ask a passenger to assist you, or pull over to a safe location to change your GPS or review your map/directions.

- **Secure your pets.** Unsecured pets can be a big distraction in the car.



- **Mind the kids.** Pull over to a safe place to address situations involving children in the car.

Focus on driving. Multi-tasking behind the wheel is dangerous. Refrain from eating, drinking, reading, grooming, smoking, and any other activity that takes your mind and eyes off the road. Make a commitment to not drive distracted. Go to <http://www.distraction.gov/content/take-action/take-the-pledge.html> to download a

pledge and share it with friends and family.

Make 2015 the year you quit the distraction habit and help save lives on our roads! And while you're at it buckle up and live!

