



Despite legislation, distracted driving remains common says Allstate Canada

Student tally during rush hour uncovers top distractions

TORONTO, ON— September 28, 2011— Canadian students took to the streets in three cities this morning to find out how bad it really is on the roads in their communities. The students, who were participating in Allstate Insurance Company of Canada's Action Against Distraction "Blow the Whistle" driver tally, recorded the number of drivers who were not paying full attention during their morning commute, counting the number of people who were using cellphones, eating and drinking, putting on makeup or fixing their hair. After only one hour of counting, at just three city intersections (one each in Moncton, Montreal and Toronto), the students discovered 802 drivers were distracted while they drove.

Allstate Agents from Calgary, Edmonton, Sudbury, Ottawa, Windsor and Halifax also did similar counts at busy intersections within their communities and found an additional 619 distracted drivers for a total of 1421 distracted drivers.

"Driving while distracted is the equivalent of driving after drinking four beers, so even one distracted driver is one too many," says Saskia Matheson, spokesperson for Allstate Canada. "All Canadian provinces now have distracted driving legislation in place, but it is not enough. Drivers need to be reminded of the dangers of taking their eyes off the road or hands off the wheel even for a few seconds," adds Matheson.

Students from Riverview High School in the Greater Moncton area, Rosemount High School in Montreal and Northern Secondary School in Toronto counted distracted drivers between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. at one busy intersection in each city by standing discreetly on all four corners to determine the type and number of distractions.

Key findings from the Blow the Whistle driver tally:

- There was a total of 802 distractions counted over the hour from the student tallies, with 199 taking place in Toronto, 314 in Montreal, and 289 in Moncton;
- An additional 619 of distractions were also counted by Allstate Agents, with 190 in Calgary, 151 in Edmonton, 59 in Sudbury, 63 in Ottawa, 59 in Windsor, and 97 in Halifax;
- Eating/drinking was the most common distraction, with a total of 25 per cent of all distracted driving behavior in all nine cities;
- This was followed by talking to other passengers and smoking that came in second and third respectively at 17 per cent and 16 per cent;

- Talking on a phone or texting made up 15 per cent of all counted distractions;
- A complete table of tallies can be found at http://goodhandsadvice.ca/media/distraction/Blow_the_Whistle_Distracted_Driver_Tally_EN.pdf.

In 2010, Allstate Canada and Leger Marketing conducted a distracted driving survey where 75 per cent of Canadians admitted to engaging in distracted driving behaviours. The combined results from the Blow the Whistle driver tally are indicating that this behaviour has not been reduced in the last year.

Montreal students also experienced first-hand what it's like to drive while distracted at a distracted driving course set-up at Olympic Park following the Blow the Whistle event. Students and media quickly learned what happens when they try to drive while texting, using an iPod or even talking to passengers. Using orange pylons as stand-ins for pedestrians and other cars, drivers smashed into the pylons and frequently had to break or swerve to avoid hitting them.

"Taking your eyes off the road for five seconds while driving at 90 km/h is like driving the length of a football field completely blind," says Matheson. "Allstate is committed to keeping the roads throughout Canadian communities as safe as possible for all drivers. Ignoring the rules of the road endangers the lives of everyone in the vehicle and in the vicinity. The Action Against Distraction program encourages all drivers to drive safely and distraction-free."

Student volunteers in all three cities urged fellow teens, teachers and parents arriving at their school to sign the Action Against Distraction online pledge at www.goodhandsadvice.ca/distraction. The website also includes a contract template for parents and teens to determine, and agree upon, the consequences they will face should they drive distracted.

All provinces and the Yukon have legislation that makes it illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cellphones and other hand-held communications devices.

Other safety advocates that participated in the September 28, 2011 event included the Toronto Police Services, Service de police de la Ville de Montréal, Codiac Regional RCMP (Moncton) and MADD Canada. Photos from the events are available for download at www.flickr.com/AllstateCanada.

About Allstate Insurance Company of Canada

Allstate Insurance Company of Canada is one of Canada's leading producers and distributors of home and auto insurance products. "The Good Hands Network®" enables consumers to contact Allstate Canada through one of 93 community-based Agencies, directly online at www.allstate.ca and through the Customer Contact Centre at 1-800-Allstate. Allstate Canada is committed to making a positive difference in the communities in which it operates and has partnered with organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD Canada), Crime Stoppers, United Way and Junior Achievement. In 2010, Allstate Canada, in partnership with the National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA), created the Allstate All-Canadians

program, a mentorship program designed to guide the next generation of Canada's hockey youth. Learn more at www.allstate.all-canadians.com.

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