



Advisory Council on Traffic Safety

ACTS NEWSLETTER

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

Chester Bankston - Chairman; Hamilton County Commission

Clarence Shattuck - Vice-Chairman; Sessions Court Judge

Monica Baker - Coordinator; Highway Safety Education

Save the Date ... July 26, 12:00 NOON

ACTS LUNCHEON.... Golden Corral on Gunbarrel Rd.

TOPIC: Distracted Driving - Questions? 209-8088

July
2017

'Textalyzer' Aims To Curb Distracted Driving, But What About Privacy?

By David Schaper. April 27, 2017. Published by [NPR](#).

If you're one of the many who text, read email or view Facebook on your phone while driving, be warned: Police in your community may soon have a tool for catching you red-handed.

The new "textalyzer" technology is modeled after the Breathalyzer, and would determine if you had been using your phone illegally on the road.

Lawmakers in New York and a handful of other cities and states are considering allowing police to use the device to crack into phones because, they say, too many people get away with texting and driving and causing crashes.

Continued on pg. 2



A driver uses a phone while behind the wheel of a car on April 30, 2016, in New York City.



Sgt. Rusty Aalberg, Red Bank Police Department

When the Red Bank Police Department was awarded a Governor's Highway Safety Office Grant to address distracted driving in 2016, Sgt. Rusty Aalberg went straight to the students to create his program. Red Bank High School students designed a logo for the distracted driving program, and had input on the program from the beginning. Now, Sgt. Aalberg is taking the distracted driving program anywhere in the region, to churches, schools, summer camps, and rec centers. We're looking forward to learning more about the RBPD Distracted Driving program at the July 26 ACTS meeting. For more information, contact Sgt. Aalberg at raalberg@redbanktn.gov.

Commissioner's Corner



Chairman Bankston
ACTS Chairman
District 9

Distracted driving is not a new issue at this point, so it's exciting to see some of the new ways we're finding to address it. We've long known that education, engineering,

and enforcement have to work together to address safety issues, so it's exciting to see the Red Bank Police Department build the community's capacity to educate our region through a GHSO grant. Keep up the good work! We're looking forward to the presentation this quarter.

"Phone records — as I found out the hard way — they're tough to get [and] it's an agonizing process," says Ben Lieberman of New Castle, N.Y., whose 19-year-old son was killed in a car crash in the Hudson Valley, north of New York City, in 2011.

The driver of the car his son Evan was in drifted over the center line and hit another vehicle head-on. Evan, who was sitting in the back seat with his seat belt on, suffered massive internal injuries and died a month later.

The driver initially told police he dozed off while driving, but in reality he had been texting behind the wheel. It took Lieberman six months to figure that out.

"Astonishingly, the phone was in the car, wrecked in the car, and it was at a tow yard," he says. "It was there for weeks — it was just sitting there."

Lieberman says police couldn't check the driver's phone to see if he was lying because they needed probable cause to get a warrant.

"We often hear, 'just get a warrant' or 'just get the phone records.' ... The implication is that the warrant is like filling out some minor form," he says. "It's not. In New York, it involves a D.A. and a judge. Imagine getting a D.A. and a judge involved in every breathalyzer that's administered, every sobriety test that's administered."

Lieberman filed a civil lawsuit to subpoena the phone records, which showed the driver had been texting before the crash. But even getting the phone records won't tell you much, he says. "It doesn't detect any of the important distractions, like email, social media or Web browsing."

So even though New York and most other states ban texting and other kinds of cellphone use while driving, Lieberman says those laws are difficult to enforce.

"The takeaway is, our current law is a joke," he says. Lieberman — along with the advocacy group he co-founded — has been working with a company called Cellebrite to develop a "textalyzer." It would be able to determine whether a driver illegally was using a phone in the moments before a crash.

Distraction Is Deadly

3,477

NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED BY
DISTRACTED DRIVING IN 2015



Cellebrite engineer Lee Papathanasiou demonstrated the device for lawmakers and reporters at the New York State Capitol in Albany earlier this week.

He says a police officer just goes to the driver and attaches a cord to connect the device to the phone. The driver doesn't even have to let go of the device.

"They can simply just tap one button ... and it will process, about 90 seconds or so, and it will show what the last activities were — again that could be a text message and so on — with a time stamp," Papathanasiou says.

The device would display a summary of what apps on the phone were open and in use, he says, as well as screen taps and swipes. "For example, if it was a WhatsApp message, or a call, it will indicate what the source was, the time stamp, and then what the direction of the communication was — so if it was an outgoing call versus an incoming call."

Papathanasiou says the technology still isn't fully developed, but would be tailored to what's legal in each jurisdiction that approves its use. And he insists that the textalyzer would only capture taps and swipes to determine if a driver was using the phone — that it would not download content — and that it would be able to tell if the driver was using a phone legally, hands-free. But some privacy advocates and civil libertarians are wary.

"Distracted driving is a serious concern, but this bill gives police power to take and search our phones after almost every fender-bender," says Rashida Richardson, legislative counsel for the New York Civil Liberties Union. "This is a concern because our phones have some of our most personal and private information — so we're certain that if this law is enforced as it is proposed, it will not only violate people's privacy rights, but also civil liberties."

Traffic fatalities nationwide are on the rise, with close to 40,000 across the country last year, an increase of 6 percent. With a significant number of those fatalities attributed in part to distractions from phones, safety advocates — including Debbie Hersman, who heads the National Safety Council — say this could be big.

"The textalyzer is going to be a game-changer when it comes to handheld devices and potentially even in-vehicle systems," Hersman says. "It will be the Breathalyzer of our electronics."

In New York, the bill authorizing police to use the textalyzer has passed out of one committee and is pending in another. Lawmakers are interested in the device in New Jersey and Tennessee, and in Chicago and other cities, too, as they consider ways to get drivers to focus on the road instead of their phones.





Hamilton County Health Department
Highway Safety Coordinator
921 East 3rd Street
Chattanooga, TN 37403

Save the Date!
ACTS Council Meeting
Golden Corral on Gunbarrel Rd.
Wednesday, July 26
at 12 pm!

Need more news hot off the presses?

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Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department



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