

More than fireworks safety needed for July 4th

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The July 4th holiday finds many families on the road to outdoor concerts and fireworks displays, to parks and other recreational areas or to gatherings of family and friends. "Firework safety is especially important on July 4, but so is safe driving," said Ted Sandlin KCEMS Director. "Drivers face the challenges of increased traffic and pedestrians as well as more distractions over the July 4th weekend."

"Following a GPS device, looking for parking, eating or drinking a non-alcoholic beverage, talking with passengers or using your cell phone and texting take your attention off the road, and can lead to a crash, which may injure loved ones or friends riding with you," said Sue Gentry RN CNO Trauma Coordinator Kimble Hospital. "Health care providers see the often tragic consequences of distracted driving every day. And, traffic accidents can be prevented if drivers stay focused and drive safely," added Gentry.

Kimble Hospital and CVRAC are participating in

the Texas EMS, Trauma & Acute-Care Foundation's (TETAF) campaign "Just Drive!" As part of the campaign, TETAF has launched a website, www.justdrivetexas.org, to provide information and resources to share facts about the dangers of driving distracted, even for just a few seconds. The site includes links to videos in which distracted drivers, as well as the victims and families, share the impact of distracted driving accidents.

"Cell phones are a reality in today's world. However, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, talking on a cell phone while driving makes you four to five times more likely to be in an injury-causing crash." While many drivers use hands-free devices, studies show that they provide no safety benefit. "It's the conversation, not the device, that creates the danger," Dr. Brenda Hinton, Trauma Medical Director, Kimble Hospital reported.

The research shows that drivers talking on a cell phone look but fail to see what is around them. Talking on the phone causes drivers to miss exits and fail to see traffic

signals and signs. Distracted drivers' reaction to braking vehicles in front of them also is impaired. "Texting or using the Internet while driving makes things even worse," said Dr. Hinton. "Texting while driving increases your chances of a crash by up to 23 times," she said.

Consider these National Safety Council facts about the impact of distracted driving in Texas.

- In 2012, cell phone use was a contributing factor in 3,283 Texas crashes.

- In 2012, driver distraction was a contributing factor in 10,261 Texas crashes.

- In 2012, driver inattention was a contributing factor in 82,833 Texas crashes.

"July 4th is a time for celebration, and Kimble Hospital and CVRAC want everyone to enjoy the long weekend and stay safe. Show your independence from your cell phone, and just drive," said Gentry.

Visit www.justdrivetexas.org to learn more. Get involved in the "Just Drive!" campaign on Twitter (@JustDrive_TETAF) and Facebook ([facebook.com/justdrivetetaf](https://www.facebook.com/justdrivetetaf)).