Two mangled, metal structures lie on the side of the road, surrounded by ambulances, while firefighters try to clear away the wreckage. This scene is all too common, yet it so easily can be avoided. In a two car accident, each passenger has less than a 10% chance of dying, but these odds severely increase when texting or talking on a phone is added to the equation. Distracted driving accounts for more than 5,800 deaths in the United States every year. Simply hanging up a phone or ignoring a text message could have saved those people’s lives. Texting while driving is like driving with a blindfold on: you’re not watching the road. Use your head, be smart, and pay attention to the road. Driving a car can be operating a two-ton weapon if you’re not careful. Will you put someone’s life in danger just to send a text message?

Kelly Faria
Leesville Road High School
Raleigh, NC
When we hear of drinking and driving, we think of fatal accidents and innocent victims, but driving distracted doesn’t evoke the same response. We think of fun times talking to friends while we have the adventure of driving alone, even if our destination is just around the corner. In reality, we might not arrive at that destination because texting or talking on the phone while driving is just as dangerous. We get distracted; we don't pay attention. It even slows down our reaction time.

Why take the same risks as a drunk driver? Driving distracted gambles with our lives and the lives of the people around us. What would you do if you caused a crash that killed someone you loved? What if you caused that crash because you couldn't wait to answer a call or a text? Teens, we are better than a statistic. Don't become a number. Hang up and drive.

Caroline Worthy
Southside High School
Greenville, SC
I would not want anybody using a cell phone with my life in his hands. I would hate for a firefighter to be texting his girlfriend while pulling me out of an inferno or for a surgeon to be calling his mother when he puts me under. However, American drivers put countless lives at risk by using cell phones while driving. At any time, 10% of drivers aged 16 to 24 are using cell phones, which reduce their driving concentration by more than one-third. This constant distraction reduces reaction time to the level of a person with a .08 blood alcohol concentration. I find it astounding that so many drivers race a massive contraption of metal down crowded streets while continually distracted and think nothing of it. Drivers of America, please hang up and take responsibility for your fellow motorists whose lives you risk every time you dial and drive.

Graham Cole
Sanderson High School
Raleigh, NC
One second. So many things can happen in just one second: a first kiss, a shooting star, a final heartbeat. In one second, disaster can strike, and your world can turn upside down. Car crashes are the number one cause of teen deaths. Frequently, it is due to distracted driving. There are laws against cell phone use while driving, but do these laws help teens in understanding the deadly consequences of their actions?

Safe driving requires constant focus. The decision to read that new text message could be your last. In one second, you’re halfway through the windshield, your life ticking away with your fading pulse. I am a sixteen-year-old, licensed driver. Already, two of my friends are gone due to distracted driving. So, the next time you’re driving and want to make that call, remember this: there is no rewind, and there are no do-overs. Hang up and drive.

Alyssa Gera
East Henderson High School
Flat Rock, NC
For my 18th birthday, my grandparents gave me their 2003 Honda Accord. Before my parents let me drive it, I had to agree that I would not use my cell phone while driving. At first, I only agreed so I could drive my new car, but as I have been driving more and more, I have seen the horrors that driving while texting or on the phone can cause. In 2007, cell phone related accidents amongst 16 and 17 year olds were about 1,000. Each year, 21% of fatal car crashes involving teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19 were the result of cell phone usage. The percentage is supposed to rise 4% every year. Not only are these statistics scary, they keep getting worse. Teens are continuing to disregard the laws that will fine minors who are caught using a cellular device while driving. Even though I am 18 and no longer a minor, I do not use my cell phone while driving. When I hear my phone ringing and it is either my house, my mom, or my dad I pull into a neighborhood or shopping center, and when I am at a complete stop I will use my phone. I don’t want to be a statistic; I want to help eliminate them. When I am a passenger in a friend’s car, I take their phone from them until we arrive at our destination. It makes me feel safer, and it makes the ride more enjoyable.

Josh Coben
Queens Grant Preparatory High School
Matthews, NC
In July of 2009, Carlos Sarrano was riding his bike in Scottsboro, Alabama, as he often did on his lunch hour. Unfortunately, a young woman driving behind him reached for her ringing cell phone, hit Carlos, and he was killed. Many people’s lives were instantly changed that day, among them is the driver, a woman in her late twenties who will have to live with the guilt of killing a man. Also, her children who were in the car witnessed the accident.

Carlos, married with two children, was the president of a local company, a community activist, and my father’s friend. So not only do his family and friends miss him, but also many factory workers who depended upon his guidance as well.

When driving with a cell phone, risks outweigh the rewards, and every driver should be aware that many things can change with a simple distraction. For this reason, every state should consider instituting a law to fine anyone caught driving with a cell phone.

Rebecca Herter
Divine Child School
Mebane, NC
"I'll call you once I get on the road", the hauntily familiar words I once often spoke echoed in my mind as I recalled my recent accident. At seventeen, a senior in high school, multi-task was my middle name. I was pretty proud at how adept I was at managing my fast food, surfing my favorite tunes, chatting with my BFF, all the while, driving my soon to be car.

Until one night...the 90 degree turn approached too fast; the loud music played, my phone dropped, my drink spilled, and I was plowing through someone's fence and yard. Much to my dismay, I totalled my dad's car that day!

A distracted driver is heading for disaster, injury or possibly even death. Let's give the road the respect it deserves and undivided attention it demands.
My choice is to HangUpAndDrive; it could save a life!!!

Rachel Beaumont
Bluffton High School
Bluffton, South Carolina
Anna was on her way to her friend’s house, not a far drive and she never thought she wouldn’t make it.

She opened her cell phone without looking up to text Britney. Anna got as far as, “r u read—”

That’s when everything went haywire. A horn blared; Anna looked up quickly, she jerked the wheel to the right, hard, but the oncoming car still grazed her rear bumper, hard enough to throw her car into a wicked spin, which sent her rolling down a hill. An oak tree brought it to a jerking stop.

She tried to lift her head up out of the pooling mass of blood surrounding her, but she couldn’t. She could feel the life seeping out of her; feel her car crushing in around her. Boy, did she regret thinking she could text while driving. Her life had barely begun, and it was ending...

Focus on Driving.

Ashley Jones
Mountain Youth School
Martins Creek, North Carolina
Amazingly, being on your cell phone causes 2,600 deaths and 330,000 injuries in the United States every year. We all pass those drivers on the road that are either talking away on their phone, or have it up to their nose punching in words and not concentrating on the vehicle they’re in control of. I’m a senior in high school and I’m here to stress that cell phone usage and driving are a very dangerous mix. Just last school year I lost a very close friend of mine to a reckless driving accident. The driver just happened to be on his phone. It’s amazing how one text message, or one 30 second phone call, can’t wait a short period of time until the car is safely pulled into the driveway. Driving a car is a big responsibility and, as teenagers, we need to stand up and put an end to dialing and driving.

Chloe Walters
Landrum High School
Landrum, SC
In today’s society, driving gets more desirable, yet dangerous every day. There are constant distractions on the road for teens and adults alike as they drive from place to place. This can range from other passengers in the car, worries about various decisions, or exhaustion. Using a phone on the road will only make this worse. Especially for young, inexperienced drivers, cell phones are huge distractions. Having a phone in one’s hand while driving allows them to look away from the road and be a potential hazard to them and those in surrounding areas. In addition, simple things like mistakes in the message or dropping the device, can lead to frustration and an extended distraction time. With this, reckless driving is more likely to occur as a person corrects the error or reaches down to retrieve the cell phone. Essentially, texting or dialing while driving is a grave decision.

Callie Boone
Pinecrest High School
Southern Pines, NC
Cell phones are great; you can talk, text, and they're trendy. When you say, "I'm dying for a phone!" Do you actually mean it? Every day teenagers die because of cell phones and that's not figurative. Teens aren't the best drivers to begin with, but add a cell phone and their gone. Teenagers think they're invincible. Well, they're not. About 50% of teen deaths come from negligence in a car. Teens see things like this happen all the time in movies, but nothing will ever happen to them. I wonder if that 50% thought the same. Can you imagine how much pain your loved ones will be in when they find out you're dead? So learn from others horrible mistakes and text when you're not driving. Cell phones are cool and trendy, but are they really worth your life?

Kacee Carr
Lake Norman High School
Mooresville, NC
Staying in touch through text or talk is tantamount to teen living. Staying safe and sparing the life of another human being while operating a motor vehicle is a basic tenet of roadway responsibility. While many teens may view their cell phones as a necessary appendage, harnessing one's cell phone while operating a vehicle, especially for inexperienced teens, could save many lives and prevent many accidents. "Paying attention" is one of the fundamentals that we learned in kindergarten. When drivers, teens or adults, allow themselves even a few seconds of distraction with cell phone use, the scene is set for drifting into another lane, following too closely to the vehicle in front of you, or slower reaction time to the unmindful pedestrian. It only takes a second! So, let's "mind our p's and q's" and remember to PULL-OVER, PHONE, and then PROCEED on the QUEST you set out to do. Hang up the phone and hang on for life!

Joi-Alexis Hurd
Raleigh Charter High School
Raleigh, North Carolina
As a freshman in high school, I heard many stories of teens who experienced automobile accidents. I met a girl who was disabled. She had been paralyzed from her wasted down after she crashed her truck. She had everything going for herself, a full volleyball scholarship. All those hopes were shattered after her detrimental accident.

The problem of cell phones still lies dormant. Adding a cell phone to the equation is like playing Russian roulette with your life and the lives of you friends. I personally don’t use my cell phone while driving. The price is to high just to text someone while driving. For some people the price isn’t high enough. Many teens only see what they want and don’t read between the lines in which the consequences lie. Hopefully we will soon break down that barrier and help teens realize that driving and dialing can be deadly.

Shane Courtney
West Henderson High School
Hendersonville, NC
I Promise...

The lights are very bright and the music sounds like church music. Why are you crying mother? Talk to me; tell me what’s wrong. Dad isn’t speaking; he only holds my hand. He hasn’t held my hand since I was a little kid.

My girlfriend Brianna is crying and she’s mad at me. What did I do wrong.

I remember driving my car, a horn blaring, flashing lights, glass everywhere, and blood trickling down my face...

Hey wait a second mister, don’t close that lid. Let me out of here! I don’t like being in closed spaces.

Oh no! Am I dead? It can’t be! I’m too young to die! I promise I will never text and drive again, I promise. Please give me one more chance. Please...

Hayden Asbury
Marvin Ridge High School
Waxhaw, NC
Many people don’t realize the dangers of texting and driving. This story will change their view. August 10, 2008 I was on my way home and started texting. Something told me to look up and when I did I realized it was too late. I ran off the road, jerked the wheel and lost control. At 65 mph I came to a complete stop, when I hit a telephone pole head on. I was taken to a local hospital, but was transferred to a major medical facility, and only given a 5% chance of living through the night. I had broken my collarbone and shattered my sternum, which punctured my lungs and caused them to collapse. Imagine at 16 being told you were going to die. I didn’t die but I’ve learned a valuable lesson – Hang Up and Drive.

Leslie Stallings
Roanoke Rapids High School
Roanoke Rapids, NC