

Hands-free cell laws don't improve driving

by UPI

SACRAMENTO - Researchers conclude that requiring U.S. motorists to use hands-free devices while talking on their cell phones won't necessarily improve their driving. The mental distractions caused by yakking is increasingly seen as a greater handicap to safe driving than having only one hand on the steering wheel.

"There is a common misperception that hands-free phones are safer when the research clearly suggests that they they're both equally risky," said Arthur Goodwin, a researcher at the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center. Goodwin told the Los Angeles Times the phenomenon of cognitive capture occurs while drivers are engrossed in a conversation and causes them to be less aware of what is going on around them. California is about to become the sixth state in the nation to require cell phone users to use headsets or similar hands-free devices while behind the wheel. The Times said that while not perfect, the law is considered a political palatable option to an unpopular ban on talking on the phone while driving.

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