

Article for April 15, 2015

I'm loving the new cars on the market today! Sleek designs, comfortable interiors, automatic everything! Just get close to the vehicle with a bag of groceries, do a little foot dance, and the truck pops open! Talk about convenience!

Once that new baby is started – probably from inside your house while you're grabbing the backpacks and kids – the smart vehicle is already waiting for your cell phone to get within a certain range to it. When it does, it automatically connects and is ready for you to enjoy "hands free" conversations while you cruise from point A to point B and all points in between! Pretty nice, right?

All of this automation may NOT be so nice! The President and CEO of the National Safety Council, Deborah Hersman, gives us a reality check when she says, "For too long, we have prioritized convenience over safety." "When we get behind the wheel, we have an obligation to keep one another safe. Drivers who justify cell phone use with the hands-free myth are disregarding that obligation. It's time to reconcile the cost of being constantly connected with the consequences of risky behavior behind the wheel."

I am guilty. So very guilty. I need to change. Perhaps you do, too.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and cell phone usage – whether handheld or hands free – contributes to being distracted while driving. Of course, there are many other activities that we experience while driving that can also contribute. I can't think of one parent that hasn't had to correct or discipline a child while they were in a vehicle. When the driver's mind is not focused on driving as the #1 priority, that driver is distracted. The cause of the distraction varies immensely, but the results are the same.

We can all probably vow to be safer drivers, and this month is a good time to refocus on the roads to protect yourself and others. That text can wait, that phone call can wait, and you'll be able to dance to that rockin' music once you stop the vehicle. Arrive alive, and Be Safe Out There!