

Topic 10

Accidents while texting

R TXTS BAD 4 UR HEALTH?

Sometimes other people's texting is plain annoying. The light from a mobile in a darkened movie theatre, the stranger who blocks a shop doorway while he thumbs his phone, the friend who answers a text message when you are trying to talk to them. Teachers complain about students texting in lessons. Bosses complain about employees texting at work. And parents complain that their children would rather text their friends than talk to them.

Luckily, this behaviour is not dangerous. On the other hand, texting while driving causes more car accidents than drunk driving. Also, more and more road accidents are caused by people texting while walking – a phenomenon that has caused the police in some American States to fine pedestrians who text and walk.

Lost in Text Land

Traffic accidents are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the mishaps that happen to people who walk and text. In London many people have walked into lamp posts while looking down at their mobile phones. So the charity "Living Streets" tried padding some of the city's lamp posts and traffic signs to prevent injuries.

In New York 15-year-old Alexa Longueira was writing a message on her cell while walking, and she failed to see the open manhole in front of her. Luckily, she got only a few scrapes and a bit of a shock.

The compulsion to text and walk is not only a problem for young people. Middle-aged mum Bonnie Miller fell off a pier while walking and trying to send a three-word text. She was rescued from Lake Michigan by a team of firefighters and police officers.

Los Angeles resident Vaz Terdandenyanyan had a worse surprise. He was walking near his house and texting his boss when he happened to glance up. Coming towards him was a wild black bear. It had walked out of the woods and into his neighbourhood. He ran away and was filmed by TV news reporters. Many Americans saw his moment of panic on the TV news.

Putting other people in danger

Risking your own health is one thing, but risking other people's health is another. Award-winning baseball player Dustin Pedroia was checking his texts while cycling through Central Park, and just missed crashing into two French tourists. Some people also text while skateboarding or skiing. US Pastor Floyd Ingram has written a humorous comment about the danger of texting while moving. Outside his church he has put up a sign for his congregation: "Honk if you love Jesus. Text while driving if you want to meet him."