

## Social Media Phone Apps are Accident Traps for Young Drivers

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson

- July 8, 2011

Thirty three states now have laws banning text messaging while driving, but many young drivers seem to have found a loophole in the law. Many smartphones now come equipped with social media applications for Twitter, Facebook and more. While the use of these applications while driving is not specifically outlawed in many areas, the use of such apps amounts to the functional equivalent of texting while driving.

According to Reuters, a recent study conducted by the University of Alabama found that approximately one third of college-aged drivers use social media applications when they are behind the wheel. To make matters worse, many drivers who had previously been involved in a car accident related to the use of their phone or another distraction reported that they continue to use social media applications while driving.

The most disturbing aspect of this study is that most college-aged drivers report that they understand that driving while engaging in social media was dangerous, but they make the conscious decision to disregard the risks and do it anyway. It appears that young drivers are more concerned with social updates and entertainment than their own personal safety and that of others on the road.

Those behind the study believe that the rate of smartphone application use will continue to grow as social media becomes more popular and widespread. State legislators may soon need to add an addendum to current anti-texting laws to clearly prohibit social applications as well. The worry, however, is that social media obsession and addiction is more powerful than the will to obey the law.

### Source

Reuters: "Chatting, text, now apps distract young drivers," Richard Chang, 28 Jun. 2011