

## Will Hands-Free Texting Prove To Be Safer Than Regular Texting?

On behalf of Johnston, Moore & Thompson

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Texting while driving is extremely dangerous for those driving on Alabama roads because it is well known to be a distraction for drivers, who must keep their eyes on the road at all times in order to prevent a serious car accident.

However, it is not simply the action of texting, meaning the tapping out of messages and the reading of incoming messages that is distracting, though this is a big part. The distraction also lies in the thinking about the actual text itself, as well as the reply, that makes [texting while driving](#) a distraction that can result in car accidents.

In an effort to make texting safer for drivers, car manufacturers have designed some new technologies that allow drivers to "text" verbally while they drive. Using one of several new technologies, a wireless Bluetooth communication device in the car will be able to read text messages aloud. The driver can then either tap a button for a preset response or, in some cases, the device would be able to transcribe and send the driver's verbal response.

Alabama has not yet passed a general ban on texting while driving, although it is prohibited for those under 18 with restricted licenses. However, under a bill currently passed by the Alabama House and under consideration in the Senate, hands-free text messaging is specifically exempt from the ban.

Automakers are certainly hoping that their hands-free systems will decrease the distractions for drivers and make driving safer while allowing drivers to engage in texting. However, there is no independent research confirming that hands-free texting is safe -- or even that is safer than standard texting.

"Unfortunately, drivers are being encouraged to do everything but drive," says a spokesperson for the Governors Highway Safety Association. "It's a sign of the pressures of modern-day life to do 10 things at once. However, driving is a complex task, and our message continues to be that a singular focus is needed."

"To date, there has been no independent research indicating a safety benefit to this technology, and until that benefit is demonstrated, we won't be able to support it," he added.

Whether hands-free texting is a distraction in and of itself -- and whether Alabama will see any reduction of distracted driving accidents as a result of hands-free texting technology -- is yet to be determined. In the meantime, if you have been injured in a car accident, you should seek help to determine whether texting or cell phone use while driving was a factor.

**Source:** The Washington Post, "[Automakers embrace hands-free text-messaging technology](#)," Ashley Halsey III, Oct. 24, 2011