

Legislate common sense?

The blaring automobile horn from behind startled me during my morning drive to work.

You know how it is— you immediately check your mirrors to see if you did something wrong. But I was in the clear, and all that I saw was a solitary minivan, following close behind me.

The van driver changed lanes and by the time I stopped beside her at the next light, I saw the problem. The woman at the wheel had a bunch of papers in front of her, and a pen in her hand.

She was filling out some forms, using the steering wheel as a desk— all while driving. I suspect she pushed down too hard on her 'desk' and inadvertently blew the horn.

She was an accident waiting to happen. I've seen distracted drivers before. A few years ago, I witnessed some guy in his BMW typing on his laptop while he was at the wheel. (Would that make his computer a 'dashtop' model?)

I recall shaking my head in disbelief back then. And with this more recent horn-blowing faux pas, I figure the lady using her 'steering wheel desk' is certainly a close second.

Let's face it, there's not a person on this fair earth who hasn't been distracted while driving, and I'm sure using a cell phone while driving is by far the most common offense.

With the recent popularity that cell phone text messaging has enjoyed, there's an increased temptation to use that cell phone even more and more, text messaging while driving.

A few weeks back, a story in the *Toronto Star* told how Ontario Transportation Minister Jim Bradley was proposing new legislation to deal with drivers who were preoccupied with "electronic distractions" while behind the wheel.

The story said that sources didn't know if the legislation would include a total ban on using electronics while driving, or a modified ban, allowing some hands-free equipment.

A total ban would mean that the use of any electronic device— a cell phone, laptop computer or even a GPS— would be an offense.

Regardless of the outcome, I figure it's a pretty

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safe bet that the time will come when we'll be restricted from holding onto a cell phone, talking while driving. And I'm not sure that's a bad thing.

Virtually every police officer on the road today agrees there's been an increase in the number of accidents caused by driver distraction— most often from using cell phones.

And I'm as guilty as the next person when it comes to answering my cell phone while behind the wheel. I do, however, keep the call to a minimum, or, if the caller is going to be long-winded, I'll pull over to talk.

Personally I can't see a total ban being placed on all equipment— it would be unenforceable.

Vehicles equipped with GPS units, trucks with tracking equipment or even two-way radios, would all have to be addressed— and it would be simply too far-reaching to enforce.

You can be sure of one thing, if the new law permits the use of hands-free equipment, every cell phone outlet in Ontario will be lined up with customers wanting to upgrade their old cell phones for ones with Bluetooth capabilities— so they can still drive and talk, hands-free.

At this point, it's a wait-and-see issue, and the outcome will be announced sometime in the fall.

Unfortunately, no matter what level of ban is legislated, there's one group that simply can't be addressed— that group of drivers which includes the lady with the 'steering wheel desk'.

You see, there's one thing in this world that no government can legislate or enforce. It's a little thing called 'common sense'.

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