

## **“Keep your eyes on the road, your hands upon the wheel”**

### ***Young drivers still more likely to text or talk while driving***

**Auckland – 31 March 2010** – It’s been the law since last November, but still only 24 percent of drivers say they always use a hands-free kit or cradle when driving, according to new research from AA Insurance. AA Insurance surveyed 4,336 New Zealand drivers aged 18-65 for the 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index.

In the main centres, Aucklanders are most likely to use a hands-free kit, with 30 percent of respondents saying they always use a hands-free kit, compared with 22 percent of Wellingtonians and 20 percent of Christchurch drivers.

Furthermore, a stubborn core comprising 8 percent of drivers admit they still often send a text while driving, despite the law change. However, that’s a significant decrease compared with 2009 results when 22 percent of people said they often sent a text while driving.

Young drivers are more likely to use a mobile without a hands-free kit or cradle. Thirty-six percent of those aged 18-34 said that despite the law change they still do this.

Researchers define driving as a complex task because it requires the driver to focus the brain, body and senses on a single task.

“When a driver is distracted he or she is more likely to experience slower reaction times, compromised hazard detection, impaired judgement about gaps in traffic and is less able to maintain appropriate and predictable speed and lane position,” says Martin Fox, Deputy General Manager, AA Insurance. “All of this means a distracted driver is a driver at risk of crashing, but also becomes a hazard for other drivers.”

“While the law change requiring hands-free kits is welcome, there is considerable research which shows that talking itself is the major distraction for drivers. Consequently we recommend that drivers keep all telephone conversations to a minimum.”

Over half – 51 percent – of those surveyed say they often eat while driving, and 45 percent say they’ve been distracted by other passengers, such as children in the back seat. Also 45 percent of people say they’ve become distracted from driving while changing the radio station or adjusting music.

Personal grooming appears to be something only other people do, with 66 percent of people saying they've often seen other people apply makeup while driving, but only 8 percent of people say they themselves have applied make-up while driving.

While GPS systems continue to grow more popular with New Zealand drivers, they are relatively less likely to distract drivers, with only 11 percent saying they've become distracted by the in-car navigation system.

"Really, if you're driving it should be the only thing you're doing," adds Martin. "If your attention is divided you are at greater risk of crashing, as these examples from our claims department demonstrate."

- A young woman was driving along a straight road and texting. She drove into a car parked on the side of the road causing \$8,000 worth of damage.
- A man decided to quickly text while he was waiting in traffic. He assumed that the traffic had moved along so accelerated slowly only to look up in time to crash into the car in front, which hadn't actually moved, causing \$7,000 worth of damage.
- A woman was driving along a straight road when she became distracted by her baby in the back seat. She tried to quickly give her baby a toy, lost control of the car and drove into a ditch. She then over-corrected and spun up a bank on the opposite side of the road before coming to a rest back on the road.
- A man was reversing out of a driveway. Distracted by a child in the car he reversed into a tree.

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#### **About AA Insurance**

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has over 300 staff servicing 150,000 plus customers and manages over 300,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, bikes, caravans and motor homes, and the remainder are house and contents insurance.

In 2008 and 2009, AA Insurance was a finalist in the unlimited/JRA Best Places to Work Survey in the medium-large workplace category, making it one of the top places to work in New Zealand.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor's (Australia) Pty Ltd on 8 January 2010. For further information visit [www.aainsurance.co.nz](http://www.aainsurance.co.nz).

**About the 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index**

The 2010 AA Insurance Drivers Index is an independent internet survey of 4,336 drivers aged 18 to 65 from around New Zealand.

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