

Drivers are killing more people than guns and it's getting worse

I imagine many of you are reading this article on the phone while driving. Put down the phone – I promise the article will be still be here when you arrive at your next destination.

No serious, put down the damn phone.

On the way to work this morning, I got behind a young lady at a red light. As soon as she stopped, she pulled out her phone to close some deal with Nike. Her eyes darted up and down every half second looking for the impending red light while closing her \$1 million dollar deal. By \$1 million deal, I mean checking her like count on her latest selfie.

When I looked into my rear-view mirror there was a woman holding a phone to her ear, likely closing a million dollar deal with Google. She was having passionate conversation and the road was a secondary concern.

The green light didn't change their activities as we accelerated forward – I was the meat in a smart phone zombie sandwich. It's a terrible feeling knowing that you are surrounded by people paying more attention to their phone than the 3,000 pound vehicles driving around them.

I read Massachusetts State Police press releases daily, and more often than not, the police reports detail vehicle accidents that contain "for unknown reasons, the driver lost control of his/her vehicle" or "drove off the side of the road." We all know what "unknown reasons" means – in most cases a distracted driver not paying attention and telling authorities that you were distracted because you were texting or chatting isn't something many would admit, thereby making

themselves liable.

According to the New York Times, highway deaths are on the rise, increasing over the past two years with a “sudden and sharp increase.” For the first time since 2007, over 40,000 people died on America’s roads in 2016 – a 14% increase in deaths since 2014. That’s the largest increase in more than a half century. This is all happening while cars are adding more and more technology that helps prevent accidents!

While our media tends to focus on gun deaths, you are far more likely to be killed by another driver than a madman with a gun. The real threat to you and me is a driver looking at a cell phone, not a crazy ISIS terrorist or gangster with a gun. **While over 40,000 people died in car accidents in 2016, 33,000 people were killed with a gun – the vast majority of those being suicide.** Statistically, you are about four times likely to be killed by another driver than a person with a gun. This needs to change.

Change starts with you – get off your phone while driving. In many cases you are driving locally and your phone can wait 10-15 minutes. Close that deal with Nike later. Our government officials need to do more than just pass laws – they need to step up enforcement. Our automakers need to figure out the best way to not only provide hand-free technology, but require it while driving. Only when these steps are taken can we reverse the trend of driving deaths on our streets.