

Devices target distracted driving

Parents use technology to keep teens' eyes on road

By Larry Copeland
USA TODAY

Anxious parents worried about teens and distracted driving are tapping new technology to keep their young drivers from texting, surfing and even talking behind the wheel.

"Absolutely, it gives me peace of mind," says Jack Lavender, 50, a consultant in Berwyn, Pa., who uses a product called Cellcontrol, which parents can buy for \$7.95 a month for up to six phones. It prevents his 21-year-old daughter and 18-year-old son from using their phones while driving.

"They live so much on the phone, and they do so much of their communication using texting. I know how dangerous it is, so for me, it's really reassuring to know that they're not doing it."

Parents say the technology makes the roads safer and provides reassurance at a time when nearly half of young drivers use their phones to surf the Internet and more than a third use them to access social media networks.

Applications that prevent people from using phones while a vehicle is moving also are gaining popularity with corporate fleet managers. A new federal regulation penalizes commercial truck

and bus drivers each time they're caught reaching for or dialing a phone while driving.

"Driving while distracted is quickly becoming the new DUI/DWI," says Daniel Maier, of Illume Software, which produces the iZup line of distracted-driving prevention products for Android and BlackBerry devices.

Jennifer Smith, 37, of Chicago says she plans to use iZup, which costs \$20 annually, to block the cellphone of her daughter, Emani Lawrence, 16, while she is driving. "Technology got us into this; technology can get us out," Smith says.

Some of the technology has been around about three years but has grown in popularity with the focus on distracted driving. Chuck Cox of Baton Rouge, La.-based Cellcontrol says about 15% of the company's business is private users, mostly parents.

Types of technology:

► Software that uses on-phone GPS or in-vehicle Bluetooth systems to determine

when the vehicle is moving.

► Devices that connect with the vehicle's on-board diagnostics port or integrate into vehicle electronics or infotainment platform, shutting off gadgets while the vehicle is moving. They include Cellcontrol, Key2SafeDriving and Taser International's Protector.

► Detection, jamming, monitoring and sensors. They include Trinity-Noble's Guardian Angel, which locks the keys of a cellphone when a vehicle is going over a pre-set speed.



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Multitasking: A survey shows nearly half of young drivers use phones.