CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2011 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s)
Emma R. Berns

Project Number
J0404

Project Title
Life and Death in the Fast Lane

Abstract

Objectives/Goals
The objective is to determine how distractions while driving, including texting, cell phone use, and eating and drinking, increase the likelihood of both fatal and non-fatal accidents on the road. I believe that the most distractive activities, such as texting, will increase the percentage of fatal accidents.

Methods/Materials
Using a simulated driving game at a local arcade, I chose a common course and car type for eight participants in my study. I had each subject race the course five times, twice without distractions, and three more while texting a specific script, talking on the phone and while eating and drinking. Two judges compiled the number of what they believed to be fatal and non-fatal accidents. These numbers were averaged in both categories to calculate the driver's performance over the entire course.

Results
Texting while driving caused the most fatal accidents, while eating and drinking caused the most non-fatal accidents. Interestingly, the average increase in dangers from distractive driving in my study closely mirror the U.S. government#s own studies.

Conclusions/Discussion
My conclusion is that the type of distraction while driving influences the severity of the accident, but all distractions behind the wheel can affect the ability of the driver to safely navigate roads.

Summary Statement
My project is about the dangers of distractive driving, and how different activities can influence the types of accidents incurred while behind the wheel.

Help Received
My parents helped with driving to the arcade and supplying money for the games. My sister helped me learn how to use Excel to create graphs for my project.