



Making our World Safer®

August 24, 2009

Joel M. Harrison
President
American Radio Relay League
225 Main Street
Newington, CT 06111-1494

Dear Mr. Harrison:

Thank you for your letter expressing your views about the National Safety Council's call for bans on the use of cell phones while driving. We appreciate you sharing our concerns around distraction while driving. We also appreciate the important role your organization and Amateur Radio operators play in an emergency.

The NSC position is grounded in science. There is significant evidence that talking on cell phones while driving poses crash risk four times that of other drivers. We are especially concerned with cell phone use because more than 100 million people engage in this behavior, with many doing so for long periods of time each day. This exposes these 100 million people and everyone who shares the road with them to this increased crash risk every day. This combination of risk and exposure underlies our specific focus on cell phones.

We are not aware of evidence that using amateur radios while driving has significant crash risks. We also have no evidence that using two-way radios while driving poses significant crash risks. Until such time as compelling, peer-reviewed scientific research is presented that denotes significant risks associated with the use of amateur radios, two-way radios, or other communication devices, the NSC does not support legislative bans or prohibition on their use.

That is not to say that there is no risk associated with drivers using amateur or two-way radios. Best safety practice is to have one's full attention on their driving, their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road. Drivers who engage in any activity that impairs any of these constitutes an increased risk. While the specific risk of radio use while driving is unmeasured and likely does not approach that of cell phones, there indeed is some elevated risk to the drivers, their passengers and the public associated with 650,000 amateur radio operators who may not, at one time or another, not concentrate fully on their driving.

Janet Froetscher, President & CEO

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I appreciate your focus on the use of amateur radios for emergency communications during disasters. I encourage ARRL to adopt best practices for the safe operation of vehicles that confines use of amateur radios while driving only to disaster emergencies. You may want to consider documenting this through a formal policy for all of your members.

If you or your staff would like to discuss state legislative opportunities and language, adoption of best practices, or any other matter related to this issue, we would be pleased to do so. Please contact John Ulczycki, Group Vice President, Research, Communications and Advocacy.

Thank you for your interest in this issue.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Janet Froetscher".

Janet Froetscher