

## **NSC continues crusade to ban mobile phone use while driving (May, 2018)**

The [National Safety Council \(NSC\)](#) continued its foolish crusade to ban the use of mobile phones while driving. This will never happen for a very simple reason: consumer like to use their mobile phones while they are driving. What the NSC is trying to do it reminiscent of Prohibition, which was repealed in 1933, triggered by consumer rebellion. To support their position, NSC has paid a research group at the U of Utah to run experiments on distracted driving, They instrument a number of volunteer drivers and measure the distraction level while they are performing actions while driving.

A study was completed a few months ago that focused on the built-in [vehicle infotainment systems in 2017 vehicles](#). The conclusions were that use of the vehicle infotainment systems was a distraction and some were worse than others. The study did point out that the vehicle user interfaces were not very good and were a big part of the distraction. The VUI was typically not very good: "Moving from simple button presses to voice commands without a careful analysis of the costs and benefits may have unintended consequences. For example, we found that using voice commands reduced visual demand but at a cost of considerably longer interaction times. In many instances a two-second button press is preferable to a 20-second voice-based interrogatory to perform the same task."

The study concludes that cognitive distraction is dominant part of the driver distraction. In order to eliminate cognitive distraction, we would need to ban all thinking while driving. We've written a number of times re the basic flaws of the U of Utah work. A fundamentally important one is that it totally ignores the fact that as drivers utilize mobile technology while they are driving they get much better at using it efficiently.

Rather than attempting to ban the use of technology while driving, the NSC should instead accept the reality that using technology while driving is highly popular, drivers will continue to utilize technology and focus on ways to make this use safer.