

# Apple's iPhone 'lock-out' patent could end texting while driving

A new automatic system to preventing phone use while driving could 'change the culture' of texting addiction, say experts



A campaign thumb-band, which reads 'texting while talking kills!'.  
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A new technology proposed by [Apple](#) would seek to address the dangerous and ubiquitous problem of drivers who use their phone behind the wheel, according to experts.

A new patent by the technology giant could “change the culture” and help stop driver distraction with an automated system that would disable certain smartphone functions when an [iPhone](#) user is driving.

One [recently published patent](#) describes a "driver handheld computing device lock-out" system that detects when a user is driving using on-board sensors or pulling information from the car when connected, blocking the use of text messaging or using other smartphone functions from the person driving.

“As a market leader, Apple could have the power to change the culture behind texting and driving, if it works and is intuitive; that would be a very good step,” said Paul Watters, head of motoring policy for the AA. “What we find in our research is that there’s an addiction here, to texting and using smartphones, it’s an addiction that is very hard to break even when in the car — it will take some system to help people break that addiction.”

## **Boosts likelihood of a crash by 23 times**

Texting while driving [is a hot-button issue](#) that has been labelled as a “widespread menace” by Brake, the road safety charity, which has been shown to slow driver reaction times by 35% and increase the likelihood of a crash by 23 times for commercial drivers.

It is illegal to use a hand-held phones while driving, even when stopped at lights or in traffic in the UK, with an automatic fixed penalty of three points on the driver’s licence and a fine of £100. Three in 10 of all drivers admitting sending or reading messages while driving, [according to research by Brake](#) and insurance company Direct Line. That number increases to more than four in

10 for drivers aged 18 to 24, while one in eight drivers admitted to using smartphone apps while behind the wheel.

## **‘Technology has a role to play’**

Attempts to disable smartphones or limit distracting features of phones have been made in the past. Several developers have released apps that prevent drivers from texting behind the wheel for Android, but it has not been possible for the iPhone due to Apple’s restrictions on apps and system control.

“Technology has a role to play, but there is no single solution to the problem of distracted driving,” said Ellie Pearson from Brake. Apple is currently making a large push into software for cars with its CarPlay system, which integrates an iPhone with a car’s entertainment and communication tools, including connecting the car’s navigation system using Apple’s mapping app.

The patent for locking down the device was filed in 2008, but has only now been published. Apple could have a system in place that plays well with CarPlay, preventing the driver from texting using the smartphone other than via voice control through the car’s systems.

“Even if you cut off some functionality, it doesn’t necessarily remove the distraction the phone causes for drivers,” warned Watters. “There is no greater safety system than simply turning off the phone while driving.”

original article:

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