



Alabama AGC wants you to *Put Down the Phone* and pay attention while you drive, particularly in road construction work zones.

Alabama AGC, is a member of the OSHA-sponsored Alabama Struck-by Alliance, which will again use National Work Zone Safety Week in April to publicize the dangers of talking and text-messaging on cell phones while driving. The April 6-10 campaign will include roadside billboards asking drivers “**R-U-In-text-icated??? - Put Down the Phone**”.

“We want people to understand the dangers of driving through work zones while distracted by cell phones especially texting” said Charlotte Kopf, Alabama AGC Mobile Section Manager and chair of the Alabama Struck By Alliance Committee.

The “**Alabama Struck-By Alliance**” began in 2001 when Paul Weaver, President of H.O. Weaver & Sons, Inc. in Mobile, was discussing a fatal struck-by accident with the Mobile OSHA Area Director, Lana Graves. She suggested he contact the local trade associations he was involved with to form an Alliance, which could provide desperately needed struck-by training to contractors statewide. Weaver, a Past President of Alabama Road Builders Association and a member of AlabamaAGC began talking with these groups. The Alliance has since grown to include 12 groups whose common goal is to provide safety training to contractor employees and awareness of work zone dangers to the driving public .

From 2005 through 2007, 101 people died in road work zone crashes in Alabama, according to the CARE Research and Development Laboratory at the University of

Alabama. In that same period, 1,651 people were injured in such crashes, said Dave Brown, deputy director of the CRDL.

Although numbers aren't available to show how many work zone crashes in Alabama involved drivers using cell phones at the time of the accident, studies are mounting that show cell phone use while driving is distracting and dangerous. The University of Utah, in a study published December 2008 in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, found that drivers on cell phones were four times more likely to fail at basic driving tasks than those talking with a passenger.

"Common sense would tell us that if it is bad in general, it is going to be even worse when we get into a work-zone situation," Brown said. A crash within a work zone is almost twice as likely to result in a fatality as one outside a work zone, he said.

Alabama doesn't have a law restricting cell use while driving, but bills that would make it a crime to text or talk on a hand-held phone while driving have been introduced in the current session of the Alabama House of Representatives. Seven states and the District of Columbia have laws banning sending text messages while driving, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Amy Davidson works with Whitaker Contracting of Guntersville to spread the message that cell phone use and driving don't mix. She and her husband, James, know the real misery that cocktail can bring.

James Davidson, 44, also a Whitaker employee, was almost killed in December 2006 when a driver, talking on a cell phone, entered a paving work zone on U.S. 431 near Sardis and plowed into an arrow board. James Davidson stood behind the sign. He was thrown into the air and suffered a traumatic brain injury. He was airlifted to a hospital in Huntsville, transferred a few weeks later to an Atlanta hospital, and went home from the hospital in March 2007.

Signs and orange barrels signaled the road work that day, Amy Davidson said. "There was plenty of warning to change lanes," she said. "But the guy was on the phone. He never did change lanes."

The next time you are driving through a work zone remember to "Put down the Phone".

The Alabama Struck By Alliance includes the following entities:

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (Alabama Offices)
Alabama - Associated General Contractors of America, Inc.;
Alabama Road Builders Association, Incorporated;
Safe State of Alabama;
Alabama Department of Transportation;

The Federal Highway Administration – Alabama Division;
3M Corporation;
Lamar Outdoor Advertising;
Alabama T-2 Center - Auburn University
Alabama Power Co.
PESCA
Alabama Asphalt Pavement Association
Whitaker Contracting
Mobile Gas – a Sempra Company
Alabama State Troopers