



NEWS RELEASE

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Cell Phone Use Increases Risk by Four Times

Speaking recently at the 17th International Safe Communities Conference in Christchurch Dr Louis Hugo Francescutti referred to the use of cell phones while driving as “the worlds most neglected injury issue today.”

Dr Francescutti experiences first hand the effects of injury and is, as a result, passionate about preventing them. He is Professor in the School of Public Health and in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the University of Alberta, and also works as an emergency physician in the Emergency Departments of the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Northeast Community Health Centre in Edmonton.

Francescutti presented research evidence illustrating crash risk at 4 times greater while using cell phones while driving. He cited evidence of cell phone users being more at risk of running red lights, having reaction times reduced by 20% and experiencing reduced peripheral vision. Speaking on a phone, says Francescutti, is quite different to speaking with a passenger. Passengers are able to adapt the discussions dependent on driving and traffic conditions.

At a time where the Ministry of Transport is actively working to reduce the incidence of injury and fatality caused by road accidents, Francescutti challenged politicians to step up and introduce legislation to mitigate cell phone use injury risk while driving.

Director of the Safe Community Foundation of New Zealand, Dr Carolyn Coggan, concurs with Francescutti. "It would be advantageous during this time of policy review, development and planning for this issue to be one of the serious considerations. Cell phone use is increasing. Let's not allow injury rates as a result of cell phone use while driving to increase."

Ends

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