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Drivers need to get the message on distraction

The State's peak motoring body has released alarming new figures on the first day of Queensland Road Safety Week which show the growing number of drivers willing to risk their lives for a text message.

RACQ spokesperson Lauren Ritchie said the Club's Annual Road Safety Survey revealed more than 40 percent of motorists who admitted to using their phones while driving were texting, up by nearly 12 percent.

"Distracted driving is the fastest growing problem we have on Queensland roads and it's disturbing to note how many people are admitting to participating in the dangerous activity," Ms Ritchie said.

"There are three different types of distraction – cognitive, physical and visual – and texting while driving encompasses all of these. Your mind is off the task, your hands are off the wheel and your eyes are off the road.

"You're four times more likely to have a crash if you're driving and using your phone."

Ms Ritchie said research also revealed drivers were handling their phones to make calls, use GPS, play music and even check social media.

"We're a society obsessed with our devices and it's an addiction that's killing us," she said.

RACQ launched its biggest advocacy campaign last month which Ms Ritchie said was to combat distraction and asked drivers to pledge to 'set your phone, then leave it alone'.

"We recognise motorists still want to use their phone for functions like music and maps, so we're asking them to take a couple of minutes before they head off to set up their phone, then switch it to 'Do Not Disturb' mode and don't touch it for the rest of the trip," she said.

"The simple action of selecting a setting on your phone only takes a moment, but could save a life."

Media inquiries: RACQ spokesperson Lauren Ritchie 0427 137 022; Media Advisor Emma Williams 0447 718 864.

RACQ is Queensland's largest club and peak independent motoring organisation. We were formed in 1905 to represent the interests of the State's first motorists and today campaign for safer drivers, vehicles and roads on behalf of the 1.7 million members who own the Club. We offer those members a vast range of motoring, insurance, banking, entertainment and travel services and benefits, and each year respond to more than a million calls for roadside assistance.