

What is STATIC? (link)

STATIC (Stop Texting And Talking In Cars), a project developed by a Florida teenager from Davie, aims to raise awareness about the dangers of texting and talking on the cell phone while driving. The project is lead by a teen driver who coordinates a group of dedicated people who seek the same goal--to save lives. STATIC includes the use of simulators to teach drivers the extreme dangers of texting and talking on a cell phone while driving. These STATIC simulators replicate a driving world with road hazards, pedestrians, and varied weather conditions. They provide the opportunity for hands-on learning so that drivers can experience virtual crashes with a variety of obstacles similar to what they might encounter while driving in the real world, but in a safer virtual world where nobody really dies.

As an interactive plan, STATIC uses driving simulators that replicate a realistic driving experience using all the components of a real car, including a steering wheel, gas and brake pedals, and turn signals. The simulators are an excellent tool for allowing drivers to experience the consequences of traffic crashes in a virtual sense without experiencing real pain or injury. Because the simulators can be modified to simulate changes in weather and road conditions, time and season, and the driver's state of mind (impaired), they provide a realistic driving experience complete with obstacles that require the driver to make decisions similar to those encountered on real roadways. The only difference between our driving simulators and the real road is that drivers can walk away from the simulator alive.

One of the goals of STATIC is to have a component specific to texting and cell phone use added to the Drug, Alcohol, Traffic, and Education (DATE) course, which is currently mandatory for all new drivers in Florida. To obtain a Learner's License or Permit in Florida, a new driver must take the DATE course. Since many teen driver crashes occur as a result of texting and talking on the cell phone, it stands to reason that adding STATIC information to the current DATE course would be an important step to saving the lives of young drivers and other motorists. In addition, Project STATIC proposes that a mandatory simulated driving experience be included in the DATE course. After students witness the dangers of texting while driving inside the simulator, they will be made more aware of the dangers of distracted driving, and, hopefully, drive more responsibly and with more care. After all, the primary goal of Project STATIC is to save lives.