

dangerous distraction

The use of cell phones and other wireless devices while driving has led to an increasing number of accidents due to driver inattention.

“HEY MOM, WHAT DID YOU need at the store?”

Junior John Kaleekal was driving down Quivira to Price Chopper, talking to his mother.

“It was dark, and I lost attention for a little bit,” Kaleekal said.

During this short conversation, the car veered slightly into the oncoming traffic lane. Luckily, Kaleekal moved in enough time to avoid a crash, but his experience caused him to change his driving habits.

“The strange thing is, it was the first time I had used my phone behind the wheel,” Kaleekal said.

Unfortunately, situations like this are becoming more common, but with more serious consequences.

“The worst consequences could follow if you get in a crash. You could take a life all for a phone call.” —*John Kaleekal, Junior*

Distracted driving, especially due to cell phone usage, is on the rise. As a result, Kansas legislators

have banned texting and calling while driving for drivers with a permit or restricted license. Drivers under 21 in Missouri can

be pulled over for texting (see sidebar). This lack of attention has increased mistakes on the road.

“Distracted driving is increasing; it’s a proven fact,” said Joe Harder, owner of Harder Performance Driving School. “Drivers need to protect themselves from all those other yahoos on the road.”

According to a 2009 Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study, “Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations,” the No. 1 cause for distraction is a wireless device. “Now, I never use my phone while driving,” Kaleekal said. “I think it’s important to be focused while you’re on the road.”

Harder said drivers who eat,