

Fri September 6, 2013

FSU Doctor: Cell Phones, Often Distractors, Could Help Curb Drowsy Driving

By [Stan Jastrzebski](#)

As the state concludes its third annual “drowsy driving prevention week,” officials say they still don’t have numbers on how many people in Florida drive when they’re too sleepy to do so. But a Florida State University researcher says one way to keep people alert may also cross some lines, just like the drivers.

A 2010 mandate from the Florida Legislature directs the Department of Transportation to inform law enforcement and the public about the dangers of drowsy driving. But Florida Highway Department spokesperson Leslie Palmer says even though officials know it’s a problem, there’s still no form that tracks sleepiness in drivers and any anecdotal evidence of it would be incomplete.

“Just having that number and being able to say that number, the resources that it would take to kind of comb through that, the numbers aren’t as large,” Palmer says. “The data won’t show numbers as large as probably the problem persists.”

Each year, the department tries to warn people not to drive drowsy, but Florida State University Professor Dr. Alice Pomidor says a more effective way to reach people might be through their cell phones.

“When you talk about encouraging cell phone use to people in transportation and law enforcement, they’re generally not real excited about it because it so often winds up being an adverse effect from the texting and distracted driving,” Pomidor says. “But for someone who’s using it in the context of setting an alarm to help improve their awareness, I think they probably would be for that.”

Pomidor says she knows of at least four [apps available](#) on [smart phones](#) which attempt to combat drowsy driving by doing everything from sounding a periodic alarm to tracking a driver’s eye and head movements and then placing a call to them to try to wake them up.



Credit Charles Wiriawan / Flickr