

Beware of PedTEXTrians!

Drivers of Trains and Cars Aren't the Only Ones Who Could Cause Accidents

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Text-messaging is about to come under intense public scrutiny – and criticism.

The trigger is the recent train collision in Southern California, in which texting, authorities say, apparently played a role in diverting the doomed Metrolink engineer's attention. In the next few weeks, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger will decide whether to sign or veto a bill sitting on his desk banning texting while driving. Combined, these two events are sure to keep texting in the news.

I will bet that the criticism will not be confined to texting while driving trains or even cars, because there is a whole other group of texters whose divided attention can be a hazard to themselves and others: pedtextrians.

"Pedtextrians" are walkers lost in their messaging, looking down at their handheld instead of up at where they are headed. Pedtextrians are people who bump into parking meters and step off curbs when the "don't walk" sign is flashing. Pedtextrians are one more reminder that all of our portable media – mobile phones, blackberries, iPhones, and Pearls – are potent weapons of mass distraction.

Lets face it, most of us have enough trouble doing one thing at a time. Put a phone in the hands of a walker, and the consequent diversion of attention lowers their IQ by 10 points. Put a Blackberry in their hand and the act of reading and typing while walking causes their IQ to plummet even further.

There are just some things that shouldn't be done at the same time. For example if you like to bird-watch



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while you hike, don't get interested in mushroom hunting, or you will spend your entire time looking up and down, up and down. Walking while tweeting or texting or IMing is, thus, just plain dumb.

Dumb, but not a crime. The good news is that we will all now be reminded of the dangers of becoming a pedtextrian. The bad news is when we all really should be worrying about more important issues, we will now have to suffer through endless chatter about the threat pedtextrians pose to modern society.

And of course we will read about it on our handhelds as we trot down the street, rushing to get a latte at Starbucks before we are late to work. Just watch out for parking meters – and other pedtextrians!

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