



## News Release

### For more information, contact:

Jessica Erickson, AT&T  
608-692-5340  
[Jessica.Erickson@att.com](mailto:Jessica.Erickson@att.com)

## Students at Austin High Urged to Take Pledge to Keep Eyes on the Road, Not on Their Phones

### ***AT&T and Minnesota Safety Council Bring Virtual Reality Driving Simulator to School to Highlight Dangers of Distracted Driving***

**AUSTIN, Tuesday, May 17, 2016** – Students at Austin High School learned today about the dangers of smartphone activities while driving and had the chance to experience the dangers firsthand when the AT&T *It Can Wait* virtual reality driving simulator visited the school.

AT&T and the Minnesota Safety Council brought the simulator to Austin High School as part of the *It Can Wait*<sup>®</sup> campaign to remind students that smartphone activity should wait until after driving. Teens were also encouraged to sign a pledge to keep their eyes on the road and not on their phones.

"In today's connected society, many drivers are focusing on their phones to text, email and even video chat when they should be concentrating on the important task of driving," said Principal Katie Baskin. "We want to help keep our students at Austin High School safe by educating them on the dangers of smartphone activities behind the wheel. We're happy to host the *It Can Wait* simulator to draw awareness to this important issue."

The *It Can Wait* simulator is visiting Austin High School as part of AT&T's nationwide tour to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

The effort is part of AT&T's *It Can Wait*<sup>®</sup> campaign, which has expanded from a focus on texting while driving to include other smartphone activities now common behind the wheel.

"When we launched the *It Can Wait* campaign five years ago, our message was simple – no text is worth a life," said Paul Weirtz, president of AT&T Minnesota. "The same applies to other smartphone activities. We are urging drivers, especially teens, to keep their eyes on the road and not on their phones."

In Minnesota, it is illegal for drivers to read, compose or send texts/emails, and access the Internet on a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic, such as at a stoplight or stuck in traffic.

New [research](#) from AT&T shows 7 in 10 people engage in smartphone activities while driving. Texting and emailing are still the most prevalent, but 4 in 10 drivers also tap into social media. Over 25 percent are on Facebook, 1 in 7 are on Twitter, almost 3 in 10 surf the net, and surprisingly, 1 in 10 video chat.

“Advancements in technology have created many other smartphone distractions for drivers beyond just texting,” said Rep. Jeanne Poppe. “Drivers need to understand these activities are just as dangerous and that they resist that temptation to pick up the phone. It’s just not worth risking a life.”

AT&T first launched the *It Can Wait*<sup>®</sup> campaign in 2010 to educate the public about the dangers of texting while driving and encourage people to take the pledge to not text and drive at [www.ItCanWait.com](http://www.ItCanWait.com).

The *It Can Wait* campaign has inspired over 8 million pledges not to text and drive across the country. Visit [www.ItCanWait.com](http://www.ItCanWait.com) to learn more.

The Minnesota Safety Council is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preventing injuries on the road, at work, at home, and in the community. For more information, see [www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org](http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org).

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