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COMMERCIAL DRIVER TRAINING EXEC SUGGESTS BAN ON CELL PHONES, PUBLIC EDUCATION TO STOP TEXTING, OTHER ABUSES IN MOVING VEHICLES

LINDEN, NJ--An executive of one of the nation's largest commercial driving schools is suggesting that a ban on cell phones in vehicles be considered and that public education programs for all ages are necessary if the practice is to be stopped.

John Diab, president of Smith & Solomon Driver Training in Linden said he will make these suggestions at the upcoming U.S. Department of Transportation summit on the dangers of text messaging and other distractions behind the wheel.

The summit is set to start Sept. 30 in Washington, D.C. where senior transportation officials, elected officials, safety advocates like Diab, law enforcement representatives and academics will convene to discuss ideas about how to combat distracted driving.

Diab said, all forms of electronic communications including cell phones, ipod/mp3 players, GPS devices, laptops and radios need to be addressed.

Diab is suggesting the implementation of credible studies that would establish the full impact of distraction caused while using two-way communication devices, followed by consideration of legislation, possibly against public approval, to ban the use of these devices in moving vehicles--including hands free devices. "Studies already show there is

no difference because it's not the physical act of holding a phone that's a problem, it's the focus of the mind," he pointed out.

Even in states with fines, statistics of phone usage behind the wheel have not gone down, he noted. "There needs to be a cultural shift that leads the way," he said. "Drunk driving was once overlooked but has now become culturally taboo. People don't do it as much, because of the education of the public and the shift in culture."

Diab emphasized that cell phone usage is only going to increase as younger people are getting their licenses, citing they are the population that uses these devices the most."

Smith & Solomon provides training solutions for commercial drivers that are designed to reduce incidents and promote safe driving skills. The company has training centers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware and conducts training seminars and customized programs across the United States.