Ford and Google Partner on Virtual Reality App to Show How FOMO Can Put Young Drivers at Risk

- FOMO – fear of missing out – causes distress in teens, increasing danger for young drivers
- Ford, Google, virtual reality studio Happy Finish team up on driver education app
- Virtual reality experience shows distractions that could be deadly
- More than 3,600 young people are killed in accidents on Europe’s roads every year

COLOGNE, Germany, Oct. 6, 2017 – Fear of missing out – or FOMO – is putting young drivers at risk. According to latest data, across Europe, more than 3,600 young people are killed in road accidents each year – and two thirds are drivers. * A desire to stay connected to friends means they are especially prone to potentially deadly distractions from social media, selfies and texts. **

To highlight the dangers involved, Ford, in partnership with award-winning virtual reality (VR) studio Happy Finish and Google, has launched Ford Reality Check, a VR app that brings to life the potentially fatal consequences of driving while distracted.

According to neuroscientist Lynda Shaw, young people are hardwired to be extra sensitive to FOMO – and that’s why they continue to communicate with their friends behind the wheel.

“Studies show that the part of the brain that helps to reduce distress when we are excluded by our peers is less active when we are younger,” said Shaw. “Teenagers find it extremely upsetting to be left out by their group. Importantly, this prefrontal cortex is also associated with functions such as evaluating risks, planning ahead and controlling our actions.”

The Ford Reality Check app uses Google Daydream VR to cast you as a distracted driver picking up friends on the way to a party. Instant messages, phone calls and passengers all compete for attention, sparking a series of near-misses. The final distraction has fatal consequences. In initial tests, 90 per cent of those who used the app said they would change their driving behaviour after the experience.

“Being involved in a car crash can be a life-changing experience – and sadly, for too many young people, one that cuts lives tragically short. We hope that by providing a chilling glimpse of how easily this could actually happen, we will encourage young people to drive more safely,” said Jim Graham, manager, Ford Driving Skills for Life.

Ford Reality Check will be demonstrated at Ford Driving Skills for Life events throughout Europe, and is expected to be made available from the Google Play Store at a later date.

# # #