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Distracted Driving

What is distracted driving?

Distracted driving is anything that takes your attention away from driving. While taking your eyes off the road or hands off the steering wheel present obvious risks, activities that take a driver's mind away from driving are just as risky.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

Driving instructors estimate that a driver makes an average of 200 decisions during every mile they drive. This leaves no room for multi-tasking. Drivers who are distracted fail to recognize potential hazards in the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their "margin of safety."

Consequences

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that in 2015 alone, 3,477 people were killed, and 391,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

During daylight hours, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones while driving. That creates enormous potential for deaths and injuries on U.S. roads. Teens were the largest age group reported as distracted at the time of fatal crashes.

What Drives People to Distraction?

- Adjusting in-vehicle electronics including navigation systems, radios or CD players, and using the phone
- Other passengers, especially children
- Driving an unfamiliar vehicle or route
- Unsecured cargo
- Eating or reading while driving
- Engaging in intense or emotional conversations
- Emotional state and/or serious personal problems
- Grooming

Tips to Manage Potential Distractions

- Pre-set the climate control, radio and CD player and identify the location of signals, wipers and lights in the vehicle before you drive. Pre-set your phone with commonly called numbers and allow voicemail to handle incoming calls.



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- Plan your route before you go and leave a little earlier; it will help you to arrive at your destination safely and less stressed.
- Put away the phone and other electronic devices.
- Pull off the road to make calls. If you must make a call, use a hands-free option.
- Postpone complex or emotional conversations on the phone or with passengers until you arrive at your destination.
- Don't text or call your teen driver when he or she is likely to be behind the wheel.
- Secure kids, pets and cargo. Give kids things to do (books, travel games, etc.) to keep them occupied.
- Don't hesitate to actually follow through with stopping the car in order to deal with children. Just be sure to pull over where it's safe and legal to do so.
- Constantly search the roadway ahead for situations that could require you to take quick action.

Acknowledgments:

[Minnesota Network of Employers for Traffic Safety](#)

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[National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)



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