

Distracted Driving

Distracted driving occurs any time you take your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel or mind off the task of driving safely. Any non-driving activity that you engage in can be potentially distracting and result in a motor vehicle accident. New research suggests that distraction is present in 52% of normal day-to-day driving. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the average time a driver's eyes are off the road while texting is five seconds. When traveling at a speed of 55 miles per hour, that is enough time to cover the length of a football field!

Additional data from The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that:

- Over **3,477 people** were *fatally* injured in distracted driving incidents in 2015.
- In 2015, over **391,000 serious accident-related injuries** were caused by distracted driving.
- Over **78%** of all distracted drivers are distracted due to texting.

The Main Types of Distracted Driving

Visual

Averting your eyes from driving

- Programming / viewing your GPS or navigation system
- Reading a text message
- Rubbernecking (looking at a scene on the side of the road)
- Looking at a passenger as you speak to them

Manual

Taking your hands off the wheel

- Reaching for something inside the vehicle
- Adjusting the radio
- Eating or drinking
- Applying makeup or shaving
- Dialing the phone
- Swatting a bee or bug inside the car while driving

Cognitive

Taking your mind off driving

- Talking on the phone
- Arguing with a passenger
- Thinking about stressful problems at work or home
- Daydreaming (thinking about your next day off or vacation)



Tips For Employers

- Create an acceptable driving record criteria and complete annual motor vehicle record checks on all drivers prior to allowing them to drive for company business.
- Require employees that drive professional or company vehicles in the scope of their job to complete defensive driver training prior to being placed behind the wheel.
- Create a fleet safety policy that includes these key points.
- No texting or use of a hand-held phone while driving.
- Consider banning the use of hands-free phones, as this is a cognitive distraction.
- Enforce the mandatory use of seatbelts.
- Consider using technology that monitors driving behavior or that blocks cell phone use while vehicles are in motion.

Tips For Employees

- Be sure to get enough rest. Aim for a minimum of 8 hours if possible.
- Get familiar with your vehicle's controls and safety features prior to driving.
- Program your GPS or navigation system prior to beginning your drive.
- Adjust controls such as radio, mirrors, seat and ventilation before you drive.
- Turn off your phone or record a voicemail telling your callers that you are travelling and will return their call as soon as possible.
- Do not text or use any hand-held device.
- Avoid reaching for dropped items while driving.
- Avoid hands-free phone use. If there is an emergency, pull over in a safe area to make your call.
- Avoid emotional conversations with passengers that cause anger or stress.
- Focus on the driving environment including other vehicles, pedestrians, animals, and objects that may require you to act quickly or stop your vehicle.

Sources: OSHA.gov, CDC.gov, NHTSA.gov, NCS.org

SafetyConnection: Distracted Driving

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