



Distracted Driving A Real Killer!

Distracted driving has become a major contributor to traffic crashes, along with alcohol and excessive speed. According to the National Safety Council, 25 percent of all traffic crashes that occurred recently involved a driver talking on a cell phone and resulted in 1.4 million crashes and 645,000 injuries. Another 200,000 crashes involved texting while driving.ⁱ Annually, during the past few years, more than 3,000 persons have lost their lives in crashes related to driver distraction and the numbers continue to rise.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) reports that 3,675 persons lost their lives in 2010 in truck involved traffic crashes. Driver distraction/inattention has been identified as one of the top five causation factors in large truck and bus crashes.ⁱⁱ

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that while talking and texting on a cell phone is a major source of driver distraction, the most frequent forms of driver distraction are talking to passengers in the vehicle (80 percent) and adjusting the radio (65 percent).ⁱⁱⁱ

Distracted driving involves one or more of the following components:

Visual Distraction—looking away from the road at 55 miles per hour for as little as three seconds will result in the vehicle traveling 250 feet, almost the length of a football field.

Manual Distraction—removing one or both hands from the steering wheel to perform non-driving tasks such as dialing a cell phone or adjusting the radio.

Cognitive Distraction—the most dangerous form of driver distraction, involves activity that causes the driver to take their mind off the task of driving. Daydreaming is a common form of cognitive distraction. Multi-tasking while driving can also lead to cognitive distraction. Cognitive distraction can cause a driver to become unaware of critical visual information. Research has shown cognitive distraction to have dangerous effects on driving as does alcohol.

Texting is the most dangerous form of distraction as it involves all three types of distraction and makes the risk of being involved in a crash 23 times more likely.^{iv}

Distracted driving can lead directly to extremely hazardous driving behaviors including speeding, following too closely and erratic lane usage. Distractions also reduce a driver's reaction time when responding to a dangerous situation. The American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) reports that the likelihood of the driver of a commercial motor vehicle being involved in a crash increases significantly when the driver has been convicted of one of these hazardous actions.^v

All drivers should follow these tips to stay alert and focused and avoid distracted driving:

- Don't multi-task while driving.
- Don't drive while fatigued. Make sure you are well-rested before getting behind the wheel.
- NEVER text or email while driving. Pull off to a safe location if you must text.
- Avoid using a cell phone while driving. Even the use of a hands-free device is dangerous as it involves cognitive distraction.
- Program the GPS and adjust the mirrors and radio before driving.
- Avoid distracting activities such as eating, personal grooming and reaching for items.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs before and during driving.
- Buckle up! It is your last line of defense. Remember, seat belts save lives.

i Understanding the Distracted Brain—National Safety Council, March 2010

ii Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Large Truck Crash Overview 2010

iii National Phone Survey on Distracted Driving Attitudes and Behavior—National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, December 2011

iv AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety 2010

v American Transportation Research Institute report on Predicting Truck Crash Involvement, April 2011

Remember, driving is a full-time job. Stay focused, keep your hands on the wheel, keep your eyes on the road and keep your mind in the game!

For more information about **Defeating Distracted Driving**, please visit these websites:

www.cvsa.org

www.DistractedDrivingHelp.com

www.AAAFoundation.org

www.FMCSA.dot.gov

www.DistractedDrivingHelp.com

www.NHTSA.dot.gov

www.OSHA.gov

www.CDC.gov

www.NSC.org

www.operationsafedriver.org

