

BACK TO BASICS:
YOUR KEYS TO SAFE
DRIVING



DRIVE SAFELY WORK WEEK: WEDNESDAY

DRIVE DISTRACTION-FREE

Driving distraction-free means actively scanning the road ahead and the driving environment surrounding your vehicle, keeping your hands on the wheel and your mind on driving.

GET THE FACTS

- Distracted driving is operating a vehicle while something—anything—diverts the driver's physical and mental attention.
- In 2010, more than 400,000 were injured and 3,092 were killed in crashes related to driver distraction, accounting for 9.4% of road fatalities.¹
- There are three main types of distraction: Visual—taking your eyes off the road; Manual—taking your hands off the wheel; Cognitive—taking your mind off the task of driving. Cognitive distraction is particularly risky. Unlike the other two types, the driver is not aware of this type of distraction.
- Although there are many things that contribute to distracted driving, the use of cell phones occurs with such frequency and duration that it is more likely to lead to a crash or near-crash than other forms of distraction.
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37%.²
- Estimates indicate that drivers using cell phones look but fail to see up to 50% of the information in their driving environment.³
- Poll after poll shows that most people feel using mobile electronics while driving is dangerous, yet the majority continues to do so. Most feel confident in their own multi-tasking skills. It's everyone else they are worried about.

There are a lot of distracted drivers out there for you to worry about.

- A recent observational study concluded that at any given time, an estimated 9% of drivers (or 1.2 million) are visibly speaking into either a handheld or hands-free mobile device.⁴
- A recent report indicated 27% of adults and 26% of teens said they have texted while driving. That's at least 55 million people who admit to driving distracted who are sharing the roads with you.⁵ If you're not focused on your own driving, you can't adequately look out for them.

"I drive 100 miles per day (160 km). 10 years ago, I gave up use of my cell phone while driving to focus on all the distracted drivers around me. I've avoided countless accidents, including no fewer than 12 red-light runners, unquantifiable stop-sign runs, and multiple lane changes that pushed me into the shoulder at high speed."

Commentor to 3/28/12 CNN article on the NTSB Inattentive Driving Forum.

¹ NHTSA 2010 FARS Report

² Carnegie Mellon, 2008

³ Strayer, D. L. (2007, February 28). Presentation at Cell Phones and Driver Distraction. Traffic Safety Coalition, Washington DC.

⁴ NHTSA Traffic Safety FACTS Research Note, Dec. 2011

⁵ <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Cell-Phone-Distractions.aspx>





GOT KIDS OR GRANDKIDS?

- Assign kids the task of looking out for other drivers who appear to be distracted and discuss what they see. This is a great awareness activity for kids as they grow to become drivers themselves and will help you stay tuned in to your driving environment.
- Provide children with things to do (books, travel games, etc.) to distract them, so they're not distracting you. If old enough, they can even keep busy on your Smartphone using apps of your choice, putting your phone in their hands, not yours.
- Remember they'll do what you do. Even if your kids are far from the driving age, demonstrate now the behavior you'll expect later on from them. Set the right example concerning the use of cell phones and texting while driving and make your priority getting everyone to their destination safely.

TIPS FOR DRIVING DISTRACTION-FREE

Stow your phone. Silence your mobile device and store it in the glove compartment. This way you won't be tempted by the flashing lights and pings of incoming messages.

Have a friends and family plan. Make friends, family and managers aware of your drive-time schedule and commit to pull over to update them should you be delayed beyond a specified window of time. If driving for an extended period, pull over to check messages at certain times to create an acceptable window for response times.

Fine tune your tunes. Digital music devices (iPods, MP3 players) can pose a major distraction. Pre-set a driving playlist to provide continuous tunes without the need for adjustments.

Be a part of the solution. If you call someone's cell phone, ask if they are driving. If the answer is "yes," ask them to call you back when they have safely reached their destination.

X your Texts. If you are in a texting "conversation" and become aware that the person you are texting with is driving, stop the exchange immediately until they are in a position to resume it safely. It goes without saying that YOU should never text and drive.

See the big picture. Making or receiving a phone call while driving puts you at four times greater risk of being involved in a crash.⁷ Take a moment to focus on those who are counting on you to get home safely every day before you make a choice to divert your full attention from the road.

Clear the clutter. Driving a clean, well-organized car will help clear your mind enabling you to better focus on the road.

⁷ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 2007

GOT TEENS?

It is particularly important to set a safe example for young drivers. You may not think that they pay attention to you, but a survey released this year by Consumer Reports reveals otherwise:

- 48% of teens witnessed their mom or dad talking on a handheld phone while driving.
- 15% witnessed their mom or dad texting while behind the wheel.
- 71% say they have seen someone their age texting while behind the wheel.¹

Establish rules

- There is growing research indicating that the young drivers who engage less frequently in risky driving behavior are those who spend the most time talking about driving with their parents.
- For 16 and 17-year-olds, carrying just one teen passenger increases their risk of being involved in a fatal crash by almost 50%; having three or more teen passen-

gers triples the risk as compared to driving alone or with an adult passenger. Establish a parent-teen driving contract that incorporates rules and strict consequences for using a mobile device while driving and carrying teen passengers. A free contract is available at www.trafficsafety.org/teendriver. Use your state's Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law as the minimum standard for setting rules.

Help curb the issue

- If your teen is looking for a topic for a research project, encourage him or her to target distracted driving by conducting observational studies near their school campus to track what they see and proposing education and awareness initiatives for their peers.
- Encourage your teen to join or even start a safe-driving advocacy group in his or her school or community. Groups such as these provide many opportunities for leadership and community involvement. For information to help your teen get started,

visit the National Organization for Youth Safety's (NOYS) website at www.noys.org.

- When shopping for your teen's first vehicle, consider one with a standard transmission to keep his or her hands on the wheel and clutch and unavailable for the use of mobile electronics. For information on vehicle safety ratings and features, visit www.safercar.gov

Ride along...every chance you get!

- NETS member companies recommend frequent "ride-alongs" with employee drivers to observe and discuss driving habits as a best practice of leading fleet safety programs. **That same concept can be applied to parents of teen drivers.** To help with this, NETS' has developed *The Novice Driver's Road Map: An Eight-Step Guide for Parents* (NDRM) to provide a structured approach to coaching teens in a variety of driving environments. To order, visit the NETS website at www.trafficsafety.org.

¹ Consumer Reports Magazine, 2012