

Safety Facts for the Road

The Solution

Distracted driving is estimated to be a factor in between 25-50 percent of all traffic crashes—that's between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes a day (NETS, NHTSA)

In Minnesota, among drivers ages 15-64, driver inattention/distracted driving is the most frequently cited factor in multiple vehicle crashes.

Numerous events and activities both inside and outside the vehicle can distract a driver. Adverse road, traffic and weather conditions require a driver's full attention.

While taking one's 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.

Drivers who are distracted fail to recognize potential hazards on the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their "margin of safety."

Provided by the Minnesota Wireless Foundation, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, the Minnesota Safety Council and the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety.

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Making Minnesota A Safer Place To Live
Chapter of the National Safety Council

To manage distractions safely:

- Secure everyone and everything that could be a distraction.
- Don't wait until you are driving to plan your route or attend to grooming. Plan before you go. Leave a little earlier—you'll get there less stressed and more safely.
- Pre-set the climate control, radio and CD player, and identify the location of signals, wipers and lights in the vehicle.
- Postpone complex or emotional conversations on the phone or with passengers until you arrive at your destination.
- If a passenger is distracting you, pull over where it is safe and legal to do so. Don't start driving until the situation is under control.
- When you are hungry or thirsty take a break.
- If the newspaper, business report or day planner is too great of a temptation, stick them in the trunk of the car until you arrive at your destination.

The next time you catch yourself slamming on the brakes to avoid hitting someone—you know what to do. Recognize that you may be driving distracted. Use some common sense and help keep our roads safer for everyone.



How Many

DISTRACTIONS

Are Too Many Distractions?



The Problem

We've all seen them—people driving down the road reading the newspaper, putting on makeup, or concentrating on a cell phone conversation. Those are the most obvious examples of driver distraction. What may surprise many people is the number of other things we do in our cars that take attention away from the vital task of driving.

How does distraction affect driving performance? Driver instructors estimate that a driver makes 200 decisions for every mile of driving. If you are mentally solving business or family problems while driving, you are adding to the total cognitive workload. If you take your eyes off the road for three to four seconds, at 55 mph the car travels the length of a football field. Other factors such as fatigue, weather and traffic conditions can increase the negative impact of distraction on driving ability.

Distracted Driving— What's Your Excuse?

Think about things you do and don't do while driving... are the following distractions part of your driving routine?

- Driving an unfamiliar vehicle without first adjusting the mirrors and seat, selecting entertainment options and locating the lights, turn signal and windshield wipers.
- Focusing attention on passengers, especially children or pets, who are being unruly.
- Eating, drinking beverages or smoking while you drive.
- Engaging in intense, complicated, emotional or lengthy conversations on cell phones or with passengers.
- Changing the radio, CD or tape while you're driving.
- Shaving, putting on makeup or engaging in other personal grooming tasks.
- Reading a road map or taking notes while driving.
- Reading a newspaper, report or book.

The Signs...

How many of these things have happened to you?

- A passenger in your car screamed or gasped because of something you did or did not do?
- You ran a stop sign or stop light unintentionally?
- You swerved suddenly to avoid an animal, a car or another highway hazard?
- You slammed on your brakes because you didn't see the car in front of you stop?
- You didn't remember driving from one place to another?
- You took a wrong turn on the highway, and you weren't lost?
- You drifted in your lane or into another lane of traffic?

These events are clues or signals that you are distracted while driving. Next time you decide to read a road map or a work report, referee an argument or even engage in an intense conversation on a cell phone or with occupants in the car, ask yourself...WHO'S DRIVING?

Lots of things cause auto crashes...but distracted driving is a major problem. Last year, 16,000 motor vehicle crashes in Minnesota involved "driver inattention." That's why you need to keep distractions to a minimum.

Safe driving requires concentration. So put down the coffee, get off the phone, and don't worry about how you look in the mirror. DRIVE SAFELY!

Remember, the best defense against distracted drivers is a seat belt! Buckling up is the single most effective action you can take against risky driving on America's roadways!