



FOCUS on Safety

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Distracted Driving

As technology advances, people have more access to information than ever before. Although there are benefits, this technology can become a safety concern when it is operated by someone who is driving a vehicle. Smartphones, GPS units, audio systems, and other electronics have an increasing number of functions, making operation more difficult for the user. While driving, the use of these types of devices can be a source of distraction.



Distracted driving is any nondriving activity a person engages in while operating a motor vehicle. Such activities have the potential to distract the person from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing. Most distractions fall into three categories: visual, manual, and cognitive. Visual distractions, such as reading a text message, cause a driver to look away

from the road. Manual distractions, such as holding a cell phone, may cause a driver to take one or both hands off the wheel. Cognitive distractions cause drivers to take their minds off the driving task. Having to make a business decision during a cell phone conversation would be an example of a cognitive distraction. Some tasks, such as texting, can involve visual, manual, and cognitive distraction. Researchers have linked all three types of distraction to degraded driving performance.

BELOW ARE SOME TIPS TO MINIMIZE DISTRACTED DRIVING:

- Be well rested and alert before driving.
- Safely pull out of traffic when responding to or initiating email, faxes or other communication with devices that require keystrokes.
- Allow incoming calls to go to voicemail while driving.
- Do not install video entertainment systems in vehicles where you can physically see the screen while driving.
- Use hands-free interfaces whenever possible.
- Familiarize yourself with in-vehicle technologies before attempting to operate them while driving.
- While driving, do not engage in conversations that require complex thought or are emotionally difficult.
- Know your route in advance and make sure that you have a good understanding of your directions.
- Manage your time so that you do not have to multitask or drive aggressively on the road.
- Make safe driving your priority.

A Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety study published in 2003 concluded that "...such in-vehicle technologies (i.e., cell phones) erode performance safety margin and distract drivers from their critical primary task of vehicle control." In a study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, it was found that 80 percent of all crashes and 65 percent of all near crashes involved driver

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inattention caused by distracting activities. Other studies have documented slowed response times to external events, greater likelihood of missed events, and decreased lane-keeping ability and speed control.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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RESOURCES

Liberty Mutual SafetyNet:

Reference Notes

Distraction from In-Vehicle Devices, LP 5412

Telematics and In-Vehicle Distraction, LP 5383

DOT

Distracted Driving Website

<http://distraction.gov/>

OSHA

Distracted Driver Page

<http://www.osha.gov/distracted-driving/index.html>

