

**D**istracted driving is any activity that takes a driver's attention away from the road. Each year more workers are killed in motor vehicle crashes than any other cause,<sup>1</sup> and thousands of those deaths are a result of distracted driving.<sup>2</sup>

## High-Risk Driving Distractions

Snacking, putting on makeup, or concentrating on a cell phone conversation while driving are examples of driver distraction, but the list of possible distractions is endless. Among the highest-risk distractions are:

- using an electronic device to text or talk;
- drowsiness;
- eating and drinking;
- grooming;
- reaching for a moving object;
- looking at an object outside the vehicle;
- adjusting a radio, music player, or sync dashboard system;



- interacting with passengers and pets; and
- reading.

## Distracted Driving Facts

- Distracted drivers lead to about 391,000 injuries and almost 3,500 deaths in the United States each year.<sup>3</sup>
- Over 100 people die each day in car crashes. Nine of those fatalities are a result of distracted driving.<sup>4</sup>
- At 55 mph, sending or reading a text takes your eyes

off the road for about five seconds, long enough to cover a football field.<sup>5</sup>

- At any given moment during daylight hours, an estimated 3.8% of drivers in the United States are using a handheld cell phone.<sup>6</sup>
- In a survey of Fortune 500 companies that implemented total cell phone bans, only 7% of respondents said productivity decreased, while 19% thought productivity increased.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Distracted Driving: No Texting. Website PDF. Accessed March 12, 2020. <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/3416distracted-driving-flyer.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup>National Highway Transportation Safety Administrations. Distracted Driving. Website. Accessed April 10,2020. <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>.

<sup>3</sup>Reuters. Bans on Texting While Driving Tied to Drop in ER Visits for Crash Injuries. Health News. April 3, 2019. Website. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-driving-texting/bans-on-texting-while-driving-tied-to-drop-in-er-visits-for-crash-injuries-idUSKCN1RF2MM>.

<sup>4</sup>National Safety Council. Hands-Free is Not Risk-Free. Website PDF. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/tools-resources/infographics/hands-free-is-not-risk-free>.

<sup>5</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Motor Vehicle Safety: Distracted Driving. Website. Accessed April 14, 2020. [https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted\\_driving/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/index.html).

<sup>6</sup>National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Distracted Driving at Work. Website. Accessed April 14, 2020. <http://www2.driveless.com/pdfs/Safe-Driving-Is-Serious-Business-Employer-Fact-Sheet-1.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup>NHTSA National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Traffic Safety Facts Research Notes. Website PDF. Accessed April 14, 2020. <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/#/DocumentTypeList/11>.

## Main Types of Distractions



### Manual: Keep Hands on the Wheel

- Save the texts and web browsing for later.
- Finish grooming, eating, and drinking before driving.



### Visual: Keep Eyes on the Road

- Read directions before starting a trip.
- Use the voice command feature when using navigation.



### Cognitive: Stay Focused, Stay Sober

- Avoid the risks of any speech-to-text application on cell phones or electronic devices.
- Avoid driving fatigued or drowsy.
- Never drive with alcohol or drug impairment.

## There is a Disconnect

According to a survey from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 88% of drivers believe distracted driving is on the rise and is a serious driving risk.<sup>8</sup> Despite the findings, the survey indicates there is a disconnect between what drivers do and what they believe. While most drivers recognize the dangers of taking their eyes off the road, they engage in distracting behaviors anyway. Driving requires a driver's full attention. To eliminate distractions drivers must focus on the road ahead.

## Distractions Risk Levels

A distraction's risk increases by the degree of attention it requires, and by the frequency the driver is exposed to it. Although many things contribute to distracted driving – eating, drinking, drowsiness, adjusting the radio, reaching for an object – cell phone use is the most likely distraction to lead to a crash. An estimated 27% of all car crashes involve handheld or hands-free cell phone use.<sup>9</sup>

## Distraction Risk Levels

### RISK LEVEL 1

Listening to the radio

Minimal cognitive distraction

### RISK LEVEL 2

Talking on handheld or hands-free electronic devices

Moderate/significant cognitive distraction

### RISK LEVEL 3

Using a speech-to-text application

High level of cognitive distraction

<sup>8</sup>AAA NewsRoom. Distraction Tops Drivers' List of Growing Dangers on the Road. Website. Accessed April 10, 2020. <https://newsroom.aaa.com/tag/driver/>.

<sup>9</sup>National Safety Council. Cell Phones are Involved in an Estimated 27 Percent of all Car Crashes, says National Safety Council. Website. Accessed April 10, 2020. <https://www.nsc.org/in-the-newsroom/cell-phones-are-involved-in-an-estimated-27-percent-of-all-car-crashes-says-national-safety-council>.

# Action Steps to Avoid Distraction

**1**

## ***Turn Off Temptation***

Do not text or talk on your phone while driving. Turn off your cell phone until you reach your destination. Research from the National Safety Council shows that hands-free phones are as much of a distraction as handheld phones. Place your device out of sight – in the glove box or the console -- so it's out of mind.

**2**

## ***Stop to Call or Text***

If you cannot wait to make a call or text, pull to a safe and legal place. It's illegal in Texas to text and drive. Many Texas cities have stricter laws that prevent all handheld cell phone use while on the road. While traveling, cell phones should only be used for emergency purposes.

**3**

## ***Have a Plan***

Don't wait until you are driving to plan your route. Use navigation devices with voice directions and set your destination before leaving. GPS and navigation systems can be as distracting as cell phones. Know where you are going in advance. Even with voice input, miss-heard words and bad-routing can take your attention off the road.

**4**

## ***Pull Off the Road When Drowsy***

Drowsiness increases the risk of a crash by nearly four times. A study by the AAA Traffic Safety Foundation found that 37% of drivers report having fallen asleep behind the wheel. An estimated 21% of fatal crashes and 13% of crashes with severe injuries involve a drowsy driver. If you feel tired, get off the road.

**5**

## ***Limit the Number of Passengers in Your Vehicle***

Talking with passengers is a cognitive distraction, but passengers can also help alert you to dangers outside the vehicle. Suspend conversations when approaching locations with heavy traffic, road construction, or severe weather conditions. Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations with passengers.

**6**

## ***Avoid Eating, Drinking, and Smoking While Driving***

A busy day is no excuse for distracted driving. Eating and drinking while driving may seem like a time-saver, but it makes you less attentive to drivers around you. Dropping a cigarette or spilling food or a drink are major causes of distracted driving.

**7**

## ***Keep Your Eyes Moving***

Make a full-mirror sweep with your eyes every five-to-six minutes to ward off a wandering mind. When possible, vary your route so routine trips like commuting to and from work don't become mundane.

**8**

## ***Keep a Safe Distance***

Driver training professionals suggest a following distance of three-to-four seconds in good weather. This gives you more time to react to what's happening in front of you, reducing the risk to you and your passengers.

# How Employers Can Prevent Distracted Driving

- Ban texting and handheld phone use while driving a company vehicle or using a company-issued phone in a personal vehicle.
- Consider banning the use of hands-free phones.
- Require workers to pull over to a safe location if they must text, call, or look up directions.
- Communicate your company's cell phone and electronic devices policies to employees, have employees sign a contract stating that they will comply, and list consequences if these actions are not followed.

- Provide workers with regular information to help them understand the importance of focused and alert driving.

For more information on ways to prevent distracted driving, review the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation-Workplace Safety's free publications:

- [Occupational Driving Safety Workplace Program](#)
- [Occupational Driving Safety Program Checklist](#)



*Safety Violations Hotline*

**1-800-452-9595**

[safetyhotline@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:safetyhotline@tdi.texas.gov)

The Texas Department of Insurance,  
Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC)  
E-mail [resourcecenter@tdi.texas.gov](mailto:resourcecenter@tdi.texas.gov)  
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

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