

Three Fatal Stories, Talking & Texting

A GAS UTILITY WORKER was killed when an SUV veered into his short-term work zone and struck him on the edge of a five-lane city road. The worker parked the company pickup half on the sidewalk and half in the bike lane, and set up safety cones for a temporary worksite. He wore a bright red T-shirt. The 18-year-old driver of the SUV was allegedly talking on a cell phone.



A 23-YEAR-OLD DRIVER of a medical transport van was killed when his van veered off the road into a ditch. The van traveled down the ditch until it hit a driveway, which sent it airborne. Landing in the ditch again on the other side of the driveway, the van plowed through 100 feet of chain-link fence before being stopped by a telephone pole. The driver was apparently killed by a fence pole that penetrated the windshield. An open cell phone was found on the floor near the driver's foot.

A 47-YEAR-OLD DELIVERY DRIVER in a flatbed pickup was killed on the highway while traveling in the wrong lane. The truck struck one vehicle and continued on, then struck another vehicle head on. The driver was not wearing a seatbelt and was killed instantly. Other drivers sustained minor injuries. Prior to the incident, witnesses noticed the driver weaving, evidently distracted – perhaps using a cell phone. Calls were recorded just before the crash, telling the driver he needed to change his destination.

Best Practices for Driver Safety

Consider turning off your cell phone when you drive, or place it in an inaccessible location where you will not be tempted to reach for it.



If you need to answer a handheld cell phone while driving, pull to the side and stop your vehicle completely before reaching for the phone.

If you intend to use a hands-free phone, place it in a holder in front of you before driving. Avoid using the phone in hazardous conditions or on unfamiliar roads. Tell the person on the phone that you are driving. Be prepared to end a conversation abruptly if necessary..

Do not text while driving. Reading, writing, or dialing a phone can be extremely hazardous, because it is easy to lose track of time. Text absorbs attention.

While driving, avoid talking or thinking that involves concentration, especially calculations with numbers, directions, or distances.

Keep your eyes on the road during any nondriving activity. If a person or situation demands your attention, pull over and stop. Any eye glances away from the road ahead should be less than 2 seconds.

Driving while drowsy is extremely dangerous, especially at night. Talk with a passenger, or best, stop the vehicle and take a nap. Avoid any distracting activity when tired.

Never drive while intoxicated.

Wear the seatbelt and harness as a driver or passenger to reduce the risk of serious injury.

Dialing, talking, texting...

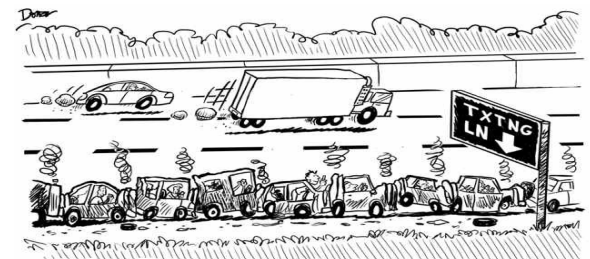
KNOW the Hazards of Driver Distraction

DRIVER DISTRACTION IS A FACTOR IN AT LEAST ONE-FOURTH OF ALL CRASHES.

Often, drivers are looking at an object in their lap or on the seat next to them.

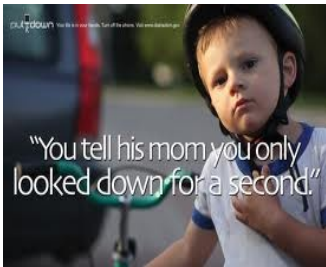
GLANCES AWAY FROM THE FORWARD ROADWAY FOR 2 SECONDS DOUBLES THE RISK OF A CRASH. Short driving-related glances at rear-view mirrors or outside conditions reduce the risk of a crash.

DIALING IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN TALKING ON A CELL PHONE, but talking lasts longer, so both activities contribute about the same to the number of crashes.



Both handheld and hands-free phones distract drivers

Many studies have found “no essential difference” between drivers using handheld or hands-free phones.



Drivers using either phone miss signals and react more slowly.

For either phone, dialing is dangerous.

Both types of phone usually require a driver to look directly toward the device when dialing. Voice-activated hands-free phones often require redialing and increased effort.

The position of the phone in the vehicle makes a difference. Answering from a holder in front of the driver is safest.

California’s Cell Phone Law

CVC §23123 & §23123.5 prohibits use of a cell phone while driving, except for a hands-free device for drivers 18 and over. Police may enforce the traffic violation as a primary stop. Exceptions:

- Summoning medical or emergency help if no passenger can do it;
- Operators of an authorized emergency vehicle during the course of employment

Drivers using a cell phone are more likely to crash

Common Driver Distractions and the Risk of a Crash Event Compared to Attentive Driving

	Risk multiplied by
Reach for a moving object	8.8
Read	3.4
Apply makeup	3.1
Cell phone: dial by hand	2.8
Eat	1.6
Cell phone: talk/listen	1.3
Attentive driving	1.0
Passenger in adjacent seat	0.5

Source: Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study, 2006. Crash Event = Rapid, severe evasive maneuver that results in crash or near-crash.

Driving safety information is also available online from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration at www.nhtsa.gov



Mental Distraction Matters

Physical distractions – such as reaching for an object or reading – are obviously dangerous while driving. Distraction from thinking is less obvious, and can be even more dangerous, because the driver may be unaware of it.

The condition of “looking but not seeing” or “inattention blindness” can occur when alone daydreaming or in conversation. Distraction while talking on a phone is greater than talking to a passenger, because a passenger can pace a conversation according to the driving situation – and may actually reduce risk by keeping the driver alert. Younger drivers are more likely to be distracted talking to passengers.

Making calculations with numbers, directions, or distances appear to distract the most. Listening to music or an audiobook appears to have no effect on performance.



Avoid Multi-Tasking

Multi-tasking increases the risk of a crash. Answering a ringing phone – either handheld or hands-free – while also changing music or interacting with a navigation system is dangerous, particularly at high speeds or when following another car.

Teen drivers are at higher risk, apparently because of their high “willingness to engage” in multiple distracting activities while driving. Adult drivers learn to avoid distractions.

Provided by:

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