

## Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel and Just Drive for Safety Sake

Safe driving requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention.

That means whenever a motorist is behind the wheel of a vehicle, their eyes, hands,

feet, and brain should be focused on the task of driving and only the task of driving.

Distractions and inexperience are the leading cause of crashes

among teenage drivers.

This edition of the Road Ahead will look at common types of distractions, the dangers, and prevention.

### *Distractions Come in Many Different Forms*

So, what is a distraction?

A distraction is anything that takes a motorist's visual, manual, and/or cognitive attention away from driving.

Texting on a cell phone is the most dangerous distraction because it takes all three types attention. But it is far from the only thing that can impede good driving habits and a motorist's ability to react to changing road conditions.

Distractions include the following:

- **Eating, drinking, and smoking** — These all create safety problems because they often require drivers to take their hands off of the wheel and take their eyes off of the road. Motorists who eat or drink while driving have trouble controlling their vehicle, difficulty staying in their lane, and have to brake more often.
- **Changing music** — Adjusting the radio or CD player means a motorist is not holding the wheel with both hands and giving driving their full concentration.
- **Cell phones** — Talking, texting, or emailing on a phone requires a combination of a driver's visual, manual, and cognitive attention. Even hands-free electronic devices can cause safety issues.
- **Interacting with other passengers** — This is particularly a problem from novice or



teenage drivers. If a teen driver has other teens as passengers, statistics show they are more likely to have a crash than if driving alone or with adult passengers.

Additional examples of distractions are:

- Searching for or moving an object in the vehicle
- Reading or writing
- Personal grooming, such as combing hair or applying makeup
- Looking at people, objects, or events happening off the roadway

# Plan Ahead to Help Avoid Distractions

A 2015 Erie Insurance distracted driving survey reported that drivers do all sorts of dangerous things behind the wheel, including brushing teeth and changing clothes.

The survey also found that one-third of drivers admitted to texting while driving, and three-quarters saying they've seen others do it.

It is estimated that at any given daylight moment, 660,000 people across America are using a phone or another electronic device while driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 10 percent of all drivers age 15 to 19 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted.

NHTSA also found that drivers in their 20s represent 23 percent of drivers in all fatal crashes, but 27 percent of the distracted drivers and 38 percent of the distracted drivers who were using cell phones in fatal crashes.

How can distracted driving and the resulting crashes be prevented?

One step is **education**. Share with others the dangers of distracted driving.

**Stop** it when possible. Politely inform distracted

drivers their behavior is unsafe for themselves and others.

Take the **pledge** to drive distraction free and keep it. Through [www.Distracted.gov](http://www.Distracted.gov), a NHTSA website, drivers can download a pledge sheet to use and share. Make sure there is follow through.

Put cell phones and other electronic devices in the **back seat** or another place that will elevate the temptation to use them.

**Pull over** before doing things like manipulating GPS devices, reaching for something in another area of the vehicle, or attending to passengers.

Check out [JustDrive.org](http://JustDrive.org) or [www.Distracted.gov](http://www.Distracted.gov) for additional safety information.

**Engaging in activities associated with the use of a hand-held phones or other portable devices, like reaching for a phone, dialing, and texting, increase the risk of getting into a crash by three times.**

10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10

**Five seconds is the average time a driver's eyes are off the road while texting. When traveling at 55 miles per hour, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.**

10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10

## Texting Can Lead to a Ticket

Pennsylvania's anti-texting law went into effect on March 8, 2012. It prohibits any driver from using an interactive wireless communication device to send, read or write a text-based message while their vehicle is in motion.

It is a primary offense and carries a \$50 fine, plus court costs and other fees.