

SAFETY COMMUNICATION

— Distracted Driving

...It's More Than Just a Bad Call



It's well known that talking on your cell phone while driving is an unsafe practice, and many of us have changed our ways in response to the ongoing campaign to avoid distracted driving. But what else should we avoid when behind the wheel?

Each year there are between 3,500 and 6,000 deaths caused by distracted driving – far too much loss from a correctable behavior. There are three main types of distraction:

Visual: taking your eyes off the road

Manual: taking your hands off the wheel

Cognitive: taking your mind off driving

In addition to texting and making cell phone calls, distractions can include:

- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video

Some activities—such as texting—take the driver's attention away from driving more frequently and for longer periods than other distractions. At 55 mph, the average text takes your eyes off the road long enough to cover a football field. Even 30 seconds after you've sent that text, recent studies have shown you're still not fully engaged. Which means you're still driving distracted.

Here are some tips from the Automobile Club of America (AAA) to help drivers avoid distractions:

- Store loose gear, possessions, and other distractions that could roll around in the vehicle, so you don't feel tempted to reach for them.
- Make adjustments before you begin your trip. Address vehicle systems such as GPS, seats, mirrors, climate controls, and sound systems before hitting the road.
- Finish dressing and personal grooming at home before you get on the road.
- Eat meals or snacks before or after your trip, not while driving.
- If children in the car need your attention, pull off the road safely to care for them. Reaching into the backseat can cause you to lose control of the vehicle.
- As a general rule, if you cannot devote your full attention to driving because of some other activity, it's a distraction. Take care of it before or after your trip, not while behind the wheel.

We live in a world of overstimulation and constant distraction. When behind the wheel, give yourself – and everyone else – a break and stay focused on the task at hand.

There is no shortage of information and training material on distracted driving! Check out the distracted driver videos on our website or take a look at these links:

- [Distraction.gov-Facts and Stats](#)
- [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#)
- [CDC Motor Vehicle Safety-Distracted Driving](#)
- [National Safety Council-Distracted Driving: Calls Kill](#)