

Distracted Driving

Week Number 16 (April 16 - 22) 2017 Edition

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this safety talk, participants will be able to:

- Be familiar with what it means to drive while distracted
- Recognize behaviors that cause distracted driving

Drivers today seem to be more distracted than ever before. There are many causes for this distraction; longer commutes, an increase in traffic congestion, and the increased availability of technology that can be used in a vehicle. Longer commutes mean less time at home or on the job increasing the overall level of stress felt by a driver. These distractions often cause drivers to forget that their primary responsibility on the road is to drive focused and to stay safe. OSHA states that distracted driving is a factor in about 25-30% of all traffic crashes, that adds up to about 4,000 crashes a day.

One's ability to deal with distractions varies from driver to driver and even changes from one day to the next depending on the driver's level of stress or fatigue. Distractions from driving include both conditions inside the car which the driver may have control over as well as outside of the car where the driver has no control, things like weather, roadway work or traffic congestion. It is fairly obvious that if a driver takes his or her eyes off the road for even a second then they are distracted. A less obvious form of distracted driving occurs when the driver's eyes are on the road, but the mind wanders or is distracted. If the driver is going over a disagreement with the boss from earlier in the day, the complete attention of the driver is not on the road and this is just as dangerous. Research into distracted driving has shown that this habit increases the risk of rear-end and single vehicle crashes. This is mainly due to the fact that distracted drivers often don't recognize potential hazards in the road and react more slowly to changes in traffic conditions.

How do you know if you are a distracted driver? OSHA has come up with some questions that will help identify if you are a distracted driver.

- Has a passenger in your car screamed or gasped because of something you did or did not do while driving?
- Have you run a stop sign unintentionally?
- Have you had to slam on your brakes because you didn't see the car in front of you stop?
- Have you ever gotten to a destination and not remembered driving from one place to another?
- While driving do you:
 - Talk to passengers?
 - Adjust vehicle climate or radio controls?
 - Eat a meal or a snack?
 - Use a cell phone?
 - Read a map or newspaper?
 - Spruce yourself up, for example comb your hair, and brush your teeth, put on makeup?

If you regularly participate in any of these activities, you are at times a distracted driver and are adding to a potentially dangerous situation. Whenever possible these activities must be avoided, and your full attention placed on the task of driving safely.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *About how many crashes a day can be attributed to distracted driving?*
- *Are all distractions to driving outside of the vehicle? Explain.*
- *List some activities commonly done in vehicles that lead to distractions for the driver.*

