

Driving Distractions FactSheet

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Eliminating Distractions

A recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study performed by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute has reported that “nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use, and drowsiness.” Some of the highest risk distractions while driving are reaching for a moving object, an insect in your vehicle, looking at an object outside the vehicle, entering data on a hand-held device keypad, changing a CD, applying makeup, and reading. Professional drivers should eliminate distractions from their driving habits and know how to identify other drivers who may be distracted while driving.

Professional drivers can use the following steps to avoid being distracted while driving.

- Get adequate sleep before any trip because fatigue can decrease attention and reaction time.
- Don't drink alcohol before driving.
- Avoid taking medication that causes drowsiness, either before the trip or while driving.
- Pre-program radio stations.
- Pre-load favorite CDs or set up your iPod.
- Clear the vehicle of unnecessary objects.
- Review and become familiar with all safety and usage features on any in-vehicle electronics.
- Review maps and plan travel route or program your GPS device in advance.
- Fasten safety belts before starting the vehicle.
- Check that all passengers are wearing safety belts and that children are in an approved child passenger restraint system or safety belt.
- Adjust all mirrors for best all-around visibility before starting the vehicle.
- Don't read or write while driving.

- Avoid smoking, eating, and drinking while driving.
- Don't engage in stressful or emotional conversations with passengers in the vehicle.
- Pull off the road in a safe place to deal with insects, unruly passengers, children, or pets.
- Always keep cool when in stressful driving situations.

Preventive Measures

Professional drivers can identify other drivers who may be distracted while driving and take measures to insure safety.

- Beware of drivers who are drifting over the centerline or out of their lane.
- Watch out for drivers who are preoccupied with reading, eating, smoking, talking on a cell phone, etc.
- Be cautious of drivers who appear to be involved in conversations with their passengers.
- Never try to pass a driver who appears to be distracted.
- Remember that the distracted driver may not be aware of the vehicles around them.
- Give a distracted driver plenty of room and maintain a safe following distance.



Photo courtesy of AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety



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- Do not respond to another driver's erratic driving by driving aggressively or becoming angry.
- Always wear safety belts.

With the increase in new technologies (cell phones, PDA's, DVD players, computers, GPS satellite communication systems, etc.) that can be used or included in vehicles, it is important for professional drivers to learn how to manage normal distractions and technological distractions.

- When possible, pull off the road in a safe and legal place when making or receiving a call on a cell phone.
- Load favorite CD's or program your iPod before driving. DO NOT watch video screens while driving.
- If possible, turn off cell phone until destination is reached or use caller identification feature to track calls while driving.

- Pre-program frequently called numbers into cell phone.
- Purchase and install a hands-free device so both hands remain on the steering wheel.
- Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations even if using a hands-free device.
- Suspend all conversations when approaching locations with heavy traffic, road construction, heavy pedestrian traffic, or when driving in severe weather conditions.
- Do not try to type or read messages on a computer or satellite communication system while driving. By learning how to manage everyday distractions, technological distractions, and others drivers who may be distracted, professional drivers become safer drivers.

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