



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Resource Document Driving Safety *Distracted Driving*

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Narrative:

Distracted driving, most often thought of in terms of calling or texting on a cellphone, has gained national attention as a major contributor to fatal crashes. The American Automobile Association Foundation for Traffic Safety reports there are nearly 8,000 crashes each day that can be attributed to distracted driving.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, at its www.distraction.gov website, identifies three main types of distraction: manual, visual and cognitive.

Manual involves taking your hands off the wheel to do something besides drive. That could include talking or texting on a cellphone, grooming, eating or picking up something inside the vehicle.

Visual means taking your eyes off the road. Whether you're looking at a map, adjusting your GPS or radio, it only takes a moment of distraction to get you into deep trouble. For example, looking away from the road to send or receive a text message takes your eyes off the road an average of 4.6 seconds. During that time, if you are driving 55 mph, you will have traveled the length of a football field essentially blind.

Cognitive distraction means that while your car is on the road, your mind isn't. Whether you're talking on a cellphone, thinking about a problem in your life or just daydreaming, you're basically running on autopilot. The National Safety Council points out this is particularly dangerous because people typically don't recognize when they're cognitively distracted. As a result, they're exposed to the risk of an accident over a much longer period of time, effectively increasing the likelihood they'll have a

crash. In addition, studies have shown hands-free cellphones don't effectively protect against the risks of distracted driving. Using MRI tests, researchers at Carnegie Mellon University found cognitive distraction significantly impaired the part of the brain that recognizes movement. They also found distracted drivers fail to "see" nearly half of the visual information in their environment. As a result, they often fail to notice highway exits, red lights, stop signs and navigational signs — all of which increases the risk of an accident.

Key Messages:

- Distracted driving contributes to nearly 25 percent of all fatal vehicle crashes
- There are three types of distraction that can impair drivers: manual, visual and cognitive.
- Cognitive distraction is particularly dangerous because many drivers do not recognize how it impairs them. This can lead them to spend significant time on the road cognitively distracted; increasing their risk of being in an accident.

Talking points:

- Distracted driving has become a serious factor in vehicle accidents. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2010, 3,092 people were killed and 416,000 others injured in accidents involving distracted drivers.
- Drivers using hand-held devices are four times more likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves.
- Text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times worse than driving while not distracted.
- Driving while using a cellphone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent.

Tips:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the American Automobile Association encourages people to follow these tips to help end distracted driving:

- Protect lives by never talking or texting on the phone while driving.
- Be a good passenger and speak out if the driver of my car is distracted.
- Encourage friends and family to drive phone-free.
- Read maps and check traffic conditions before you get on the road.
- Turn off your phone before you drive so you won't be tempted to use it while on the road. Pull over to a safe place to talk on the phone or to send and receive text messages or emails.
- Get the kids safely buckled in and situated with snacks and entertainment before you start driving. If they need additional attention during the trip, pull off the road safely to care for them. Similarly, prepare and secure pets appropriately in your vehicle before getting underway.
- Eat meals and snacks before getting behind the wheel, or stop to eat and take a break if driving a long distance.
- Stash away loose objects that could roll around and take your attention away from driving.
- Adjust seat positions, climate controls, sound systems and other devices before you leave or while your vehicle is stopped. Make sure your headlights are spotless so you can see everything on the road and every other driver can see you better. Keep your windshield clean and remove dangling objects that could block your view.
- Your car isn't a dressing room. Brush your hair, shave, put on make-up and tie your necktie before you leave or once you reach your destination.
- Focus on the task at hand – driving safely. Scan the road, use mirrors and practice identifying orally what you just saw to enhance your engagement as a driver. Keeping your head 'in the game' behind the wheel will help you improve your overall awareness and behavior as a driver.

Historical Reference:

<https://safety.army.mil/>

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/>

<http://www.monash.edu.au/>

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/>

Statistics:

- In 2010, 3,092 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver and an additional 416,000 were injured.
- Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to get themselves in a crash serious enough to cause personal injury.
- Text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times worse than not driving distracted.
- Driving while using a cellphone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent.

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