



DRIVING DISTRACTIONS AND TEENS FACT SHEET

What is Distracted Driving?

A distraction is anything that takes your mind or eyes off the road like texting a friend, eating behind the wheel, reaching for something in your car or changing the tunes. Distractions can lead to a serious car crash or even death!

- Nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before a crash.¹ Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use and drowsiness.¹
- A high percentage of the crashes reported by teens involved rear-ending a car that had stopped while the teen driver was looking away from the road.²
- According to a 2009 survey by The Allstate Foundation:³
 - 82 percent of teens claim to use cell phones while driving.
 - 49 percent of teens consider texting very or extremely distracting while driving (up from 31 percent in 2005).
 - Teens say texting is the number one driving distraction.
 - 44 percent of driving teens say they drive more safely when they are solo than with friends in the car.
 - Significantly more girls than boys confess to the likelihood of distracted driving behaviors in the future:
 - 84 percent of girls and 69 percent of guys are likely to adjust music / volume while driving.
 - 59 percent of girls and 24 percent of guys are likely to dance to music while driving.
 - 55 percent of girls and 45 percent of guys are likely to eat while driving.

Multitasking and Driving

- Multitasking is a serious distraction while driving.
 - Reaching for a moving object within the car increases the risk of a crash or near-crash by nine times.¹
 - Looking at something outside your car, dialing a phone or reading while driving by about three times.¹
 - Applying makeup or shaving while driving increases your chance of crashing by about three times.¹
- The process of brain maturation occurs over a longer period of time than previously thought. Studies show that the brain continues to develop well into the 20s. Particularly late to mature is an area of the brain responsible for judgment, impulse control, decision-making and multitasking.



Texting, Cell Phones and Driving

Why are states cracking down on cell phone use and texting behind the wheel? Cell phones are the most common distraction for drivers, especially teens.

- An estimated 1.6 million teens drive while reading or writing text messages.²
 - Texting laws: Currently, 18 states and the District of Columbia have banned texting and driving. Novice drivers are also banned from texting in nine states and the U.S. Department of Transportation is looking to make laws in all 50 states. To view the full list and to see the laws in your state, visit http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html.
- Hands-free cell phones are no less dangerous while driving than hand-held cell phones because the conversation itself is the major distraction.⁵
 - When young adults talk on cell phones while driving, their reaction times become as slow as reaction times of some senior citizens.
 - Drivers talking on cell phones may be as impaired as drivers with 0.08 percent blood alcohol level that defines drunken driving in most states.⁶

Friends in the Car

- For each friend you add to your car, your crash risk doubles. With two or more passengers, the fatal crash risk is five times higher than driving alone.⁴

Driving Tired

- Drowsiness is a significant problem and a drowsy driver is four times more likely to be in a crash. But drowsy driving may be significantly under-reported in police crash investigations.¹

For more information, facts and figures, click on the hotlinks below.

References

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2. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Youth Driving Report" accessed August 17, 2009 <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/NewDriver/TeenUnsafeDriving/pages/FindingbyProgArea.htm>,
3. The Allstate Foundation, "[Shifting Teen Attitudes: The State of Teen Driving 2009](#)".
4. Doherty, et al., The Situational Risks of Young Drivers: The Influence of Passengers, Time of Day, and Day of Week on Accident Rates." *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 30:45-52.
5. University of Utah, "DRIVERS ON CELL PHONES CLOG TRAFFIC" accessed August 17, 2009 <http://unews.utah.edu/p/?r=121907-2>.
6. Strayer, David L.; Drews, Frank A.; Crouch, Dennis J., "A Comparison of the Cell Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver." *Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society*, Volume 48, Number 2, Summer 2006: 381-391(11).