

Tips for Avoiding Distracted Driving

The dangers of distracted driving are pretty well known at this point. And yet, nearly everyone is guilty of some form of distracted driving. Distraction.gov, the official U.S. Government website for distracted driving, reports that there are three types of distraction experienced while driving. Manual (taking your hands off the wheel), Visual (taking your eyes off the road) and Cognitive (taking your mind off driving). Experts say texting while driving is one of the most dangerous forms of distraction, because it involves manual, visual and cognitive distraction simultaneously.

Any of these distractions alone can increase the risk of an accident. For instance, according to a study conducted by Carnegie Mellon, using a cell phone while driving causes a 37 percent reduction in the amount of brain activity associated with driving the car. When all three types of distraction are combined, as they are when the driver composes a text message or manipulates a GPS app or map website on their phone, the likelihood of an accident increases dramatically.

Here are some tips and reminders to avoid distracted driving:

- Turn off electronic devices and stow them out of reach before starting to drive.
- Get organized before you get on the road – Finish dressing and personal grooming at home, program your navigation system, adjust mirrors, pre-set your radio stations, load your CD player, etc. before pulling out of your driveway.
- If you need to make a call, pull over to a safe area first. Ask a passenger to make the call or respond to a text for you.
- Avoid eating while driving. Allow enough time so you can eat at the restaurant and not while you're driving.
- Do your multi-tasking outside the car. Focus on the road and the drivers around you. Do not let anything divert your attention, actively scan the road, use your mirrors and watch out for pedestrians and cyclists.



Inevitably, you'll encounter other factors vying for your attention as you drive. The trick is to prioritize — ask yourself if it's worth taking your focus away from driving to attend to another task. Take action this during the April 2015 Distracted Driving Awareness Month by making those smart choices and changing risky behavior.