



# DIAL IN TO THE TASK AT HAND... DRIVING



Minimal Cognitive Distraction

Moderate/significant increased cognitive distraction

High level of cognitive distraction

**UNFORTUNATELY, THERE IS A DISCONNECT...**

Despite all the research indicating that any form of mobile phone use is unsafe while driving, in a large AAA survey of drivers:<sup>8</sup>



**2/3** SAY USING A HAND-HELD PHONE IS **UNACCEPTABLE**



**2/3** SAY USING A HANDS-FREE PHONE IS **ACCEPTABLE**

## A BETTER PLAN?

Silence and stow all mobile devices before you go. Out-of-sight is out-of-mind.

Driving safely depends largely on the frequency of scanning the area around you and your reaction time to what is happening up ahead. Like driving drowsy, being distracted, whether visually, manually or cognitively, has a negative effect on these skills.

In 2014, 3,179 people died in crashes involving distracted drivers, a 9% increase from the previous year.<sup>1</sup> However, since police reports mainly depend upon information provided by drivers at the scene, crashes attributed to distracted driving are thought to be well under-reported. According to the National Safety Council, 26% of all traffic crashes involve the use of cell phones—handheld and hands-free<sup>2</sup>—one of the most prevalent contributors to distracted driving.

## MOBILE PHONE USE AND DRIVING... LET'S TALK.

The use of hand-held cell phones by drivers may be declining but the number of crashes reported to insurers is not. In fact, they are increasing. One theory is that drivers are switching to hands-free phone use. Research, however, concludes that hands-free devices do **not** reduce the cognitive distraction associated with talking on the phone while driving.

Drivers using mobile phones, whether handheld or hands-free, **look** but fail to **see** up to 50% of the information in

their driving environment.<sup>3</sup> Researchers attribute this to "inattention blindness," similar to tunnel vision, and it prevents drivers from effectively monitoring surroundings to identify and react to potential hazards.

The combined results of more than **50** studies reported significant delays in drivers' reaction time when talking on a cell phone while driving—whether handheld or hands-free.<sup>4,5</sup>

## WHAT ABOUT VOICE COMMANDS—DO THEY HELP?

Another study by AAA of voice-activated systems found it can take up to 27 seconds to regain full alertness **AFTER** a driver makes a voice command to do things like change the radio station, find a contact or compose a voice/text message.<sup>7</sup>

In 27 seconds at just 25 mph—the typical speed limit for residential areas—drivers travel the length of 3 football fields! Stop signs, kids or adults on bikes, pedestrians, other vehicles and more could be missed while the brain is readjusting to the task of driving.



## DROWSY, DISTRACTED, OR FOCUSED... YOUR DECISIONS DRIVE YOUR SAFETY

References for all pages can be found at <http://trafficsafety.org/dswd/dswd-2016-materials/references>

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# #WHILEDRIVING #BADIDEA

Distracted driving has become so prevalent it has its own social media hashtag.

According to a recent Twitter analysis,<sup>9</sup> a significant number of drivers think it's a good idea to take and share pictures—#whiledriving. Maybe knowing you're sharing the roads with these people will give you extra incentive to stay focused on your task at hand—driving!

Top 10 hashtags used in conjunction with #whiledriving:



## GOT KIDS?

Assign kids the task of looking out for other drivers who appear to be distracted and discuss what they see. This is a great awareness activity for them as they grow to become drivers themselves and will help you stay focused on your driving environment.

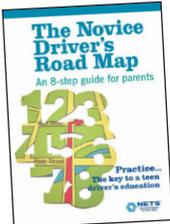
## HOW ABOUT A TEEN DRIVER?

AAA analysis of naturalistic (in-vehicle) teen driving video footage from 2007-2015 showed an average of 59% of crashes contained some type of potentially distracting behavior during the six seconds leading up to a crash. This was 4x greater than estimated from police reports alone.<sup>12</sup>

### Ride along...every chance you get!

Just like many fleet safety managers frequently ride-along with employee drivers to observe and discuss driving habits, that same concept can be applied to parents of teen drivers. To help with this, NETS has developed *The Electronic Novice Driver's Road Map: An Eight-Step Guide for Parents™* (eNDRM) to provide a structured

approach to coaching teens in a variety of driving environments. To download the free interactive guide, visit the NETS website at [www.trafficsafety.org](http://www.trafficsafety.org).



Ever text someone while they are driving? Two U.S. court cases have set precedent for the sender of text messages to a driver who then causes a crash to be named as a defendant in litigation.<sup>13</sup>

## ARE COLLISION-AVOIDANCE FEATURES THE ANSWER?

Collision avoidance features such as front crash prevention, blind spot warning and lane departure warning will help protect drivers from other distracted drivers as well as themselves. But according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, it will take years—as many as 15-20—for these features to be in the



majority of vehicles sharing the roads with us.<sup>10</sup> The average age of vehicles on the road today is a record-high of 11.5 years old,<sup>11</sup> so even if you have the latest crash avoidance features, it's likely others don't. This means YOU need to be the best safety feature in your vehicle.

## 7 ACTION STEPS AGAINST DISTRACTION

- 1 **Avoid temptation** to talk or text on your phone. Turn it off while driving or place your device in the glove box or center console so it's out of sight and **out of mind**.
- 2 **Vary your route** when possible, so routine trips like commuting to and from work don't become mundane.
- 3 **Keep your eyes moving**. Make a full mirror sweep with your eyes every 5-6 seconds to stay alert and ward off allowing your mind to wander.
- 4 **Keep a safe following distance**. Driver training experts suggest a following distance of 3-4 seconds in good weather—more in inclement weather. The 3-4-second following rule increases visibility and gives more time to react to what's happening in front of you, reducing risk to you and your passengers.
- 5 **Clear your mind**. You cannot focus on driving if your mind is on work or family pressure or your to-do list. Take a moment before you drive to get your mind focused on the task at hand—getting to your destination safely.
- 6 **Have a plan**. Don't wait until you are driving to plan and become familiar with your route. Use navigation devices with voice directions and set them prior to pulling out.
- 7 **Help others help themselves**. Make it a practice when you call someone's cell phone to ask if they are driving. If the answer is "yes," take it upon yourself to call back later or ask them to return your call when they've reached their destination. And never text someone you know to be driving.

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