

Safety Article



These programs offered by the Utah Safety Council offer practical strategies to reduce collision related injuries and fatalities on Utah roadways.

PAY ATTENTION: SAFE DRIVING IS A FULL-TIME JOB

Thoughts For the Road... Distracted driving is estimated to be a factor in between 25 to 50 percent of all traffic crashes - that's between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes every day.

Distracted driving is the presence of anything that can distract a driver's physical and mental attention from driving. While taking one's eyes off the road or hands off the steering wheel present obvious risks, activities that take a driver's mind away from driving are just as risky.

Driving instructors estimate that a driver makes an average of 200 decisions during every mile they drive. This leaves no room for multi-tasking while behind the wheel. If you are mentally solving business or family problems while driving, you are adding to the total cognitive workload. If you take your eyes off the road for three to four seconds, at 55 mph the car travels the length of a football field. Other factors, such as fatigue, weather and traffic conditions, can increase the negative impact of distractions on driving ability.

Drivers who are distracted fail to recognize potential hazards in the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their "margin of safety."

What Drives People to Distraction?

- Other passengers, especially children
- Driving an unfamiliar vehicle or route
- Unsecured cargo
- Adjusting in-vehicle electronics including navigation systems, radios or CD players and using the phone.
- Eating or reading while driving
- Engaging in intense or emotional conversations
- Emotional state and/or serious personal problems
- Grooming

Clues That You're Distracted

How many of these things have happened to you?

- A passenger in your car screamed or gasped because of something you did or did not do.
- You ran a stop sign or stop light unintentionally.
- You swerved suddenly to avoid an animal, a car or another highway hazard.
- You slammed on your brakes because you didn't see the car in front of you stop.
- You didn't remember driving from one place to another.
- You drifted in your lane or into another lane of traffic.

These events are clues or signals that you are distracted while driving. Next time you decide to read a road map or a work report, referee an argument or even engage in an intense conversation on a cell phone or with occupants in the car, ask yourself ... who's driving?



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Tips to Manage Potential Distractions

- Pre-set the climate control, radio and CD player and identify the location of signals, wipers and lights in the vehicle before you drive.
- Don't wait until you are driving to plan your route or attend to grooming. Plan before you go and leave a little earlier; it will help you to arrive at your destination safely and less stressed.
- Pull off the road to make calls. pre-set your cellular phone with commonly called numbers and allow voicemail to handle incoming calls.
- Postpone complex or emotional conversations on the phone or with passengers until you arrive at your destination.
- Be sure to properly secure pets and any cargo you may be transporting.
- Be sure children are properly secured in an age-appropriate child passenger safety restraint.
- Provide kids with things to do (books, travel games, etc.) to keep them occupied so they're not distracting you.
- Don't hesitate to actually follow through with stopping the car in order to deal with children. Just be sure to pull over where it's safe and legal to do so.
- Safe driving practices require that you constantly search the roadway ahead for situations that could require you to take quick action.

Source: Network of Employers of Traffic Safety