

DISTRACTED DRIVING



Distracted driving is a factor in 1 out of 4 crashes nationally.*

What is distracted driving?

Distracted driving is the presence of anything that can distract a driver's physical and mental attention away from driving.

According to a research study published in 2006 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involve some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. The study also identified inattention as the main contributing factor of 93 percent of all rear-end crashes.

Distracted driving continues to be a significant and growing problem within the state of Maryland and throughout the nation. Each year, on average, nearly 70 people in Maryland die and 20,000 people are injured in crashes related to distracted or inattentive driving. More striking is the fact that 38 percent of all traffic injuries in Maryland involve a distracted driver. (Maryland State Highway Administration)

Distractions can be classified as three different types: physical, cognitive and mental. The list of contributing factors of a distracted driving related crash is endless.

What are some of the contributing factors?

- Creating or reading text messages
- Using a cell phone
- Applying lip stick
- Using a shaver
- Changing the radio station
- Using an MP3 player
- Attending to a child
- Distracted by a passenger
- Reading the newspaper
- Eating or drinking
- Checking voicemail
- Using a GPS device

Some interesting facts:

- Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) extends a driver's reaction as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of **.08 percent**. (University of Utah)
- The **No. 1** source of driver inattention is use of a wireless device. (Virginia Tech/NHTSA)
- Drivers that use cell phones are **four times** as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (NHTSA, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by **37 percent**. (Carnegie Mellon)

How do we reduce distracted driving?



The obvious way to reduce distracted driving crashes is to convince or require drivers to pay attention to their driving. This is a very difficult goal. Many drivers consider some distractions, such as eating or drinking, listening to the radio, or talking on a cell phone, to be important and common activities and are likely to give them up. Among the menu of options currently being utilized to address distracted driving include environmental (i.e., rumble strips), vehicular (i.e., blue-tooth technology), and regulatory (i.e. manufacturer mandates for seat belt warning), and behavioral (i.e. education).

The Partnership for a Safer Maryland is working to develop a diverse set of behavioral countermeasures to combat distracted driving.

*This statistic is from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. (NHTSA)

For More Information or to join the Partnership for a Safer Maryland, visit:
www.safermaryland.org