

Supporting Facts on Distracted Driving

Shining a Spotlight on Inattentive Driving in Minnesota

The Distracted Driving Epidemic

Distracted or inattentive driving is vastly under-reported in Minnesota, accounting for one-quarter of all crashes in Minnesota and resulting in at least 70 deaths and 350 serious injuries annually. Much of the issue is the driving culture, where motorists use their time in the vehicle to conduct other less necessary business — text, chat, eat, and simply not taking driving seriously.

Driving itself is a challenging task — steering, checking mirrors and traffic, signaling, maintaining safe speed and distance, reading road signs and more. Adding non-driving tasks behind the wheel increases the risk of a crash. Attentive driving is critical as the traffic environment can change in an instant — lights changing, other vehicles braking or changing lanes, and pedestrians entering the roadway.

Minnesota Laws to Curb Distracted Driving:

- All drivers prohibited from reading/composing text messages and emails, and from accessing the Internet on a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or part of traffic.
- No cell phone use for drivers under age 18 during their first year licensure.
- No cell phone use for school bus drivers.
- Other laws require motorists to drive with “due care.”

Types of Distraction:

- Visual — looking away from the road.
- Mechanical — manipulation of controls, such as dialing a cell phone or adjusting radio or music device.
- Cognitive — being “lost in thought,” or focusing on a conversation, resulting in withdrawing from situational awareness.

Distracted Driving Facts

- Each year in Minnesota, distracted or inattentive driving is a factor in one in four crashes, resulting in at least 70 deaths and 350 serious injuries. Distracted driving crashes are greatly under-reported due to law enforcement’s challenge in determining distraction as a crash factor. (Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety)
- Using a cell phone while driving, whether hands-free or hand-held, delays a driver’s reactions as much as having an alcohol-concentration level of .08 percent. (University of Utah)
- Using a cell phone while driving reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. (Carnegie Mellon)
- The worst distracted drivers are the youngest and least-experienced drivers: men and women under age 20. (National Highway Traffic Safety Association) However, Adults were “substantially more likely than teens to have talked on their cell phones while driving,” a Pew report found in September 2009.
- Driver involvement in any additional task beyond driving, contributed to more than 22 percent of all crashes and near-crashes recorded during the study period. (NHTSA’s 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study)

• Common Misperception	• Reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking on the phone is the same as talking to someone in the car. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A passenger in a vehicle is aware of the driving situation and can even serve as an additional look-out for hazards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can multi-task well. I am very good at driving and doing something else. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When we think we are multi-tasking, we are simply switching between tasks; we are not focusing on both tasks at the same time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driving is boring and wasted time. I am very busy and driving is valuable time to get things done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times more likely to be involved in injury crashes. If you're concentrating on your conversation, you're not concentrating on your driving, and you're putting yourself and others on the road at risk.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I only text or make phone calls at stop lights and stop signs where it doesn't bother anyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a cell phone behind the wheel, whether driving or stopped at a traffic signal, means you're taking your eyes off the road and your mind off driving. Even if your vehicle isn't moving, if you are in traffic and you need to pay attention to make safe, smart decisions about how to respond to traffic situations. You may be able to predict what you'll do as a driver, but you can't predict what others on the road will do.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I only text on my long drives where it doesn't bother anyone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You're reducing the time you have to respond, and your putting yourself and others in danger. If you text while driving, on average you take your eyes off the road for up to 4.6 out of every six seconds. That's like traveling the length of a football field at 55 mph hours without looking up.

Deaths by Distraction in Minnesota

- In 2007, two Minnetonka teens were killed in a crash in Scott County; the driver was reportedly scrolling on her iPod.
- In 2008, a 21-year-old motorist getting directions over her cell phone was killed when she rolled her vehicle in Stearns County, resulting in her death.
- In 2010, a 28-year-old female was looking and reaching for her cell phone while driving when she rear ended another vehicle, killing a 14-month-old boy.