



Distracted Driving Quick Facts
Presented by the EAST Advocacy an Outreach Ad Hoc Committee
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There are three main types of distraction:

- Visual — taking your eyes off the road
- Manual — taking your hands off the wheel
- Cognitive — taking your mind off what you're doing

Distracted driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing.

While all distractions can endanger drivers' safety, texting is the most alarming because it involves all three types of distraction.

Other distracting activities include:

- Using a cell phone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a PDA, GPS or navigation system
- Watching a video
- Changing the radio station, CD, or Mp3 player
- There are other less obvious forms of distractions including daydreaming or dealing with strong emotions

Research on distracted driving reveals some surprising facts:

- 20 percent of injury crashes in 2009 involved reports of distracted driving. (NHTSA).
- Of those killed in distracted-driving-related crashes, 995 involved reports of a cell phone as a distraction (18% of fatalities in distraction-related crashes). (NHTSA)
- In 2009, 5,474 people were killed in U.S. roadways and an estimated additional 448,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes that were reported to have involved distracted driving. (FARS and GES)
- The age group with the greatest proportion of distracted drivers was the under-20 age group – 16 percent of all drivers younger than 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported to have been distracted while driving. (NHTSA)
- Drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- Using a cell phone use while driving, whether it's hand-held or hands-free, delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent. (Source: University of Utah)

Police-reported data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the National Automotive Sampling show that:

- In 2009, there were 30,797 fatal crashes in the United States, which involved 45,230 drivers. In those crashes 33,808 people died.
- In 2009, 5,474 people were killed in crashes involving driver distraction (16% of total fatalities).
- The proportion of fatalities reportedly associated with driver distraction increased from 10 percent in 2005 to 16 percent in 2009. During that time, fatal crashes with reported driver distraction also increased from 10 percent to 16 percent.
- The portion of drivers reportedly distracted at the time of the fatal crashes increased from 7 percent in 2005 to 11 percent in 2009.
- The under-20 age group had the highest proportion of distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes (16%). The age group with the next greatest proportion of distracted drivers was the 20- to-29-year-old age group – 13 percent of all 20-to-29-year-old drivers in fatal crashes were reported to have been distracted.
- Of those drivers reportedly distracted during a fatal crash, the 30-to-39-year-old drivers were the group with the greatest proportion distracted by cell phones. Cell phone distraction was reported for 24 percent of the 30-to-39-year-old distracted drivers in fatal crashes.
- Light-truck drivers and motorcyclists had the greatest percentage of total drivers reported as distracted at the time of the fatal crash (12% each). Bus drivers had the lowest percentage (6%) of total drivers involved in fatal crashes that were reported as distraction-related.
- An estimated 20 percent of 1,517,000 injury crashes were reported to have involved distracted driving in 2009.

The National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey (NMVCCS) is a nationally representative survey specifically focused toward documenting events and conditions leading up to crashes.

- NMVCCS captures distraction as an associated factor to the crash and/or as the critical reason that made the crash imminent. Driver distraction was coded as the critical reason in 18 percent of the crashes. Data describing the specifics of the distraction — for example adjusting the radio or eating — are included in this data set.

Another method for collecting pre-crash data is through naturalistic driving studies, in which vehicles are equipped with cameras and data recording equipment.

- During NHTSA's 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study, driver involvement in secondary tasks contributed to more than 22 percent of all crashes and near-crashes recorded during the study period.

Data Sources

The following NHTSA data sources were used in the research:

- Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)
- National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) General Estimates System (GES)
- National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey (NMVCCS)
- The 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study
- National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) of Driver Electronic Use
- Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey (MVOSS)

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