

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month!



Join us in observing Distracted Driving Awareness Month and share the message, "When you're behind the wheel, your only job is to drive."

Many distractions exist while driving, but cell phones are a top distraction because so many drivers use them for long periods of time each day. Almost everyone has seen a driver distracted by a cell phone, but when you are the one distracted, you often don't realize that driver is you.

New technology in vehicles is causing us to become more distracted behind the wheel than ever before. Fifty-three percent of drivers believe if manufacturers put "infotainment" dashboards and hands-free technology in vehicles, they must be safe. With some state laws focusing on handheld bans, many drivers honestly believe they are making the safe choice by using a hands-free device. But in fact, these technologies distract our **(continued on page 2)**

April 20-24 is Work Zone Safety Week



Statistics from the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse show the vast majority of people killed in work zones are motorists, passengers and pedestrians. The most recent statistics show there were 762 fatal crashes in work zones resulting in 842 deaths in 2019. Of those killed, 135 were roadway workers.

Statistics for 2019 estimate there were 115,000 work zone crashes—27,000 of which were injury-involved crashes resulting in 39,000 injuries—underscoring the need to observe work zone speed limits and eliminate distractions when approaching and driving through work zones.

Each year, hundreds of people are killed in roadway work zones. Most of them are the drivers and their passengers trying to travel through the work zone. That means it's critical for everyone to pay attention. "Work zones are a sign to slow down."



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(continued from page 1) brains and continue to distract us long after we've used them. Make no mistake: This multitasking technology is about convenience, not safety.

Distracted driving

At least nine people a day are killed in distraction-affected crashes. Many employers have enacted cell phone driving policies, but cell phones aren't the only source of distractions on the road: calls, texts, vehicle touchscreens, food and even other passengers can create dangerous distractions. Employers should adopt a strong distracted driving policy asking employees to:

- Program/start GPS equipment, music or podcasts while the vehicle is safely parked
- Set cell phones to Do Not Disturb and/or silence notifications while driving
- Inform clients, associates and business partners that calls will be returned when employees are not driving
- Pull over safely and park before taking calls, sending texts/emails, or adjusting GPS/music/podcasts

Many people drive distracted even when they know about the risks. This can sometimes be due to pressure to respond or remain productive even while driving. A strong distracted driving policy sets the expectation that when employees are behind the wheel, their only job is to drive.

Impaired driving

Impaired driving has been a leading cause of U.S. traffic deaths for decades and includes more than just drugs and alcohol. Impairment might be caused by stress, fatigue and distraction that can prevent workers from being their best at work and while driving.

Distracted and fatigued drivers show signs of impairment similar to those of an intoxicated driver. Sending or reading a text for just a few seconds, for example, is equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded. Meanwhile, more than one in three workers report being fatigued, and losing even two hours of sleep is similar to the effect of having three beers

Avoiding any type of substance before and while driving is crucial to avoiding these risks, as is always getting enough sleep to feel rested. On long trips, schedule regular breaks and, if needed, pull over safely to take a nap or drink a caffeinated beverage.

New and existing safety technologies can also help, but only if they are used properly. Drowsiness Alert and Lane Departure Warning, for example, can detect common drowsy driving patterns and warn drivers to stay in their lane or take a break. Check out MyCarDoesWhat.org to learn more about the latest vehicle safety technologies.

Speeding

Speeding is a major factor in traffic crashes, as it reduces a driver's reaction time, increases a vehicle's stopping distance and reduces the effectiveness of safety structures like guardrails. Speeding also increases the odds of injury and death in a crash, particularly in crashes involving pedestrians. In addition to speeding, frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating, and running red or yellow lights can create dangerous situations for all road users.

If you notice yourself speeding, slow down, increase your following distance and focus on being a defensive driver. If other drivers are aggressive, safely put distance between your vehicles and avoid retaliating in any way.

Remember, your loved ones are counting on you to get home safe and everyone else on the road is counting on you to help them do the same.

Buckle up for safety

Over 90% of drivers and passengers in the U.S. wear their seat belts, yet more than half of vehicle occupants killed in crashes are unbuckled. Seat belts are simple, inexpensive, and effective at saving lives and preventing injuries. And employees who get in the habit of buckling up at work are more likely to do so off the clock.

Did You Know?

Vehicle crashes are the number one cause of workplace death and distracted driving has become a persistent danger on our roads. In fact, half of drivers feel pressure from employers to drive distracted according to an NSC survey. While staying productive is important, distracted driving should never be considered a business necessity.

Notes From the Editor

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