

Distracted Driving

1. The first step in fighting distracted driving is hazard awareness. Anyone who spends a lot of time on the road, like you, need to distractions for what they are: driving hazards. You need to:

- Commit to not driving while distracted
- Watch out for other distracted drivers
- Respond appropriately once a distracted driver has been identified

2. Distractions are everywhere! Distractions are anything that can take your attention away from controlling the vehicle.

Distractions inside a vehicle could include:

- Cell phone/smart phone
- E-books
- Food/drink/cigarettes
- GPS
- Handheld video games
- Laptop
- Passengers
- mp3 player

Distractions outside a vehicle could include:

- Billboards
- Buildings
- Landmarks
- Crash scenes
- People/pedestrians
- Road construction
- Scenery
- Street signs

3. **Texting.** Texting is one of the deadliest distractions you can participate in or encounter. There are some experts who regard texting as being more of a driving hazard than drunk driving.

4. Distractions can be placed in three basic categories:

- Visual
- Physical
- Mental

Visual distractions lure our eyes off of the road ahead. Drivers who check the kids' seat belts while driving are visually distracted. Electronic devices for the car, such as GPS devices and portable DVDs/digital entertainment systems, also distract drivers.

Physical distractions are those that trigger us to take one or both hands off of the wheel for any reason. Some common examples include eating and drinking in the car, adjusting the GPS, or trying to get something from a purse, wallet, or briefcase.

Mental distractions are when your mind wanders to something other than driving. Talking to another passenger or being preoccupied with personal, family, or work-related issues are some examples.

5. **Inattention blindness.** Have you ever been driving along and realized you had no recollection of the last few miles? People tend to go on autopilot when performing highly-practiced activities, like driving. Inattention blindness is when you actually don't register an object, even though you're looking right at it. Inattention blindness is one of the major causes of human error and crashes.

6. **Distracted driving strategies:**

1. **Stay focused on driving.** Don't get sucked in by a distraction. Avoid being distracted while on the road by preparing for distractions before you start your trip.
 - If you drive a tractor-trailer at 65 miles per hour and take your hands off the wheel and eyes off the road for five seconds to grab something, you're going to travel about 475 feet during those five seconds.
2. **Recognize the signs of a distracted driver.** Be 360 degrees aware of what's going on around your vehicle. Signs that other drivers are distracted:
 - Weaving in and out of traffic
 - Cutting of other drivers
 - Tailgating
 - Unexpected or unnecessary changes in speed
 - Movement inside the vehicle
3. **Don't ignore a distracted driver.** Manage them instead.
 - Increase your following distance. If you suspect you are sharing the road with a distracted driver, double your following distance to two seconds for every 10 feet on your vehicle's length. Make sure you have a big enough safety cushion between your vehicle and the distracted driver's so you have the time and room to react if they make a sudden move.
 - When you encounter a distracted driver, there are things you shouldn't do: don't sound your horn, don't flash your lights, don't make rude or threatening gestures.