

Risk Watch

Lessons learned from Deep South Loss Control



Distracted Driving— You Make the Call

In this information age and world of technology we live in, we all frequently observe drivers involved in risky behaviors while behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. Not only engaged in cell phone use, but other on-board technologies such as adjusting stereos with iPod connections, GPS, or CD/ DVD players. You can find drivers text messaging, putting on make up, writing notes, reading a newspaper, eating, drinking, and a host of other activities that take a driver's mind and hands away from the task of driving.

Many drivers these days are pressured to multi-task in order keep up with the demands in their busy schedules. Drivers with long commutes and heavy traffic feel even more pressure to accomplish a few extra tasks while driving. Many driver distractions are so common place these days that drivers don't even realize when they are actually distracted from the driving task until they are going the wrong way on a one way street or have missed an exit. And it only takes a second for a distraction to turn into a disaster.

Drivers need to realize that operating a motor vehicle is a very challenging activity and it requires their complete undivided attention. A growing shift in focus away from the roadway to a multitude of other tasks while driving will actually impair a driver's ability to recognize hazards. The environment around us is constantly changing as we move down the road; the scenarios are endless. Our main focus needs to be on scanning the road for hazards and being prepared to make adjustment to compensate for these hazards.

A conscious effort has to be made by drivers to manage distractions safely. Many businesses have adopted



distracted driving policies requiring drivers to pull over to a safe place to take or place a cell phone call or engage in otherwise distracting activity. These practices should be carried over to the everyday driver. Drivers should reduce their risk of being involved in an accident by making a conscious effort not to become distracted.



Fast Facts.... Driving Distracted Kills

- Distracted driving is the number one killer of American teenagers.
- Nine out of ten teen drivers admit to seeing passengers distracting the driver and drivers using a cell phone.
- Brain power used while driving decreases by 40% when a driver listens to a conversation or music.
- More than 80% of drivers admit to blatantly hazardous behavior (changing clothes, steering with a foot, painting nails, shaving).
- Drivers using mobile phones are more impaired than drivers with .08 blood alcohol content.
- A study of auto collisions found that 40% or more were caused by distracted driving.
- Police reported distractions were a major contributing factor in 16% of all motor vehicle deaths in 2008.

Many states have instituted laws banning the use of hand-held devices or texting while driving in an effort to reduce the dangers of distracted driving. The state of Texas bans cell phone use in school zones. Thirty-four states, the District of Columbia, and Guam ban text messaging for all drivers. Twelve of these laws were enacted in 2010 alone. Nine states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while driving. For details specific to your state, visit <http://distraction.gov/state-laws/index.html>

For more information on distracted driving, go to the Loss Control Resources section of the Deep South website at: <http://www.deep-south.com/services/clientonly/>

References:

National Safety Council,
NHTSA
National Teen Driver Survey
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging, University of Utah
State Farm Insurance Study

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