

Driving

Driving - Using Cellular Phones and Other Devices

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Does using a cellular phone while driving cause more incidents?

In general, driver distraction is one of the leading causes of traffic incidents. Using and talking on a cellular phone requires a large amount of attention and is a contributing factor to incidents. However, using a cellular phone is only one of many distractions a driver faces. In other words, concern about driver distraction should not be limited to cellular phones.

What skills does a driver use?

Skills needed by a driver include:

- Visual (seeing)
 - watching the road (in front and around the vehicle)
 - using mirrors, shoulder checks
 - checking gauges, speedometer, etc.

- Auditory (listening)
 - squealing of brakes
 - the sirens of an emergency vehicle
 - vehicle sounds

- Biomechanical ('doing', activity, hand-eye coordination)
 - turning the steering wheel
 - activating signals, headlights, horns, etc.
 - pressing the accelerator, brakes, clutch
- Cognitive (thinking)
 - anticipating any future movements
 - assessing situations such as the movement of other vehicles, weather conditions, etc.
 - preparing to avoid hazards

To use a cellular phone, the operator also needs all of these skills:

- Visual - locating correct buttons, scanning screen
- Auditory - listening to a conversation
- Biomechanical - pressing buttons, holding the phone
- Cognitive - engaging in conversation

What are some common causes of driver distraction?

It is not known how much distraction a driver can "handle" before they lose focus on the road. We probably have all seen examples of activities that can distract drivers, such as:

- Eating/Drinking/Smoking
- Reading (including looking at a map, book, etc.)
- Applying makeup, shaving, brushing teeth, etc.
- Adjusting the radio, music players, climate, or other controls
- Adjusting features such as pedals or steering wheel
- Watching a person, object or event outside the vehicle
- Moving objects in the vehicle (devices, food containers, insects, etc.)
- Talking with other people, especially if the driver turns to those in the back seat of the car
- Dialling, talking or texting on a cellular phone
- Using CB radio or other communication devices

- Features of cellular phones and other wireless communication devices, including the Internet, social media, e-mail, navigation systems, etc
 - Other wireless devices such as laptop computers, tablets, etc.
 - In-vehicle navigation systems (GPS systems, etc.)
 - Night vision systems
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Should an employer be concerned?

The potential for injury to workers or bystanders and property damage to the company or other vehicles should be a concern for employers. In the United States, companies themselves have been involved in court cases involving motor vehicle incidents related to cell phone usage because the employer allowed or encouraged workers to conduct business from the vehicle.

What are some 'good' driving tips?

Most importantly, **pay attention**. Incidents occur because drivers are not aware of the conditions around them. Be aware and know that distractions can come from many sources at any time.

In general:

- Be well rested.
- Do not consume alcohol, drugs, medications or other substances that may affect driving.
- Try not to think about personal or business matters, especially those that are upsetting.
- Do not use cellular phones or other devices if at all possible (including hands-free devices).

Before leaving:

- Stow belongings properly.
- Adjust the seat, mirrors, steering wheel, climate controls, etc.
- Select a radio station or have the music device ready.
- Plan your route, check the map or read the directions.

While driving:

- Pay attention.

- Keep distractions to a minimum (do not eat, drink, smoke, adjust the radio, use the phone, etc.).
- Be aware of changing driving conditions such as the volume of traffic, weather, etc.
- Do not reach for items that have fallen or shifted unless absolutely necessary and can be done safely.
- Do not write notes while driving and talking.
- Do not glance at incoming messages.
- Be aware of other vehicles or persons who may be distracted.

DO

- Avoid using the phone or device.
- Have a voicemail option and allow it to pick up messages.
- Pull over to a safe location to make or take a call. Pull out of the flow of traffic, especially when on a major highway (do not stop on the shoulder). Tell your caller you will phone them back after you have parked.
- Have a passenger answer or place the call.
- Use a hands-free device when using the phone (e.g., voice activation, single touch) but remember the activation process and conversation itself is still a distraction.
- Make sure other devices are mounted (not moving around) while driving.
- Pre-program commonly used numbers.
- Pause conversations if driving conditions become hazardous (e.g., rain, snow, construction, heavy traffic).

DO NOT

- Do not participate in very emotional or stressful conversations while driving.
- Do not take notes or look up information while driving. Ask the person on the other end to make notes for you if necessary.
- Do not use the device, including the text or e-mail feature, even when at a stop sign or red light.
- Do not make gestures while talking and driving.

Are there laws about using cellular phones while driving?

In Canada, all provinces and territories (except Nunavut) currently have legislation which specifically bans or restricts using hand-held cellular phones or other similar devices while driving. In all cases, drivers who cause incidents or who are driving unsafely while using a cell phone or device can be charged with offences such as dangerous driving, careless driving, and criminal negligence causing death or injury. Calling 911 in an emergency is generally allowed, but do so from a safe area.

Always check with the local, provincial, state or country regulations.

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