

Best Practice Guide

Distracted Driving

Are You Paying Attention?

Driving is a skill which requires full concentration, alertness and attention. The road environment can change in an instant and in order to react safely you need to be fully aware of what is happening around you at all times.

Driving while distracted is irresponsible and extremely dangerous - and the consequences of distracted driving can be devastating. Millions of crashes occur annually due to distracted driving, many of them resulting in serious injury and lost lives.

To be a safe driver you can never allow yourself to be distracted, not even for a second.

Focus

When driving you should be looking for potential hazards and traffic conditions as far as your vehicle would reach in 12 seconds. Within this distance you should be 'scanning' what is happening both on and to the side of the road. You must not become distracted by any one part of the road scene as this can prevent you from spotting hazards in a different direction.

It's Not Good To Talk

Mobile phones are one of the most dangerous distractions for drivers. If you drive while using a mobile phone, regardless of whether it is hand-held or hands-free, you are more likely than other drivers to:

- Crash.
- Be less aware of what is happening around you.
- Fail to see road signs.
- Fail to maintain a steady speed.
- React more slowly and take longer to brake.
- Enter unsafe gaps in traffic.
- Feel stressed and frustrated.

Passengers Can Distract

Carrying passengers can be very distracting for a driver, particularly if the passengers are children.

When carrying passengers:

- Pull over in a safe space if you need to tend to babies or children.
- Avoid turning round while driving to converse with passengers in the back seat.
- Explain to older passengers that it is dangerous to distract you while you are driving.
- Avoid heated discussions with passengers while travelling.

Don't Smoke On The Move

Smoking while driving is a distraction and increases your crash risk. Not only is the act of taking your hand away from the wheel dangerous but research has also shown that smokers are more likely to feel tense, furious, impatient and annoyed than non-

smokers and are also more likely to experience dizziness while driving. Aside from being a distraction, smoking is harmful to health. Smoking is prohibited on all company premises, including the company vehicle.

Stop To Eat And Drink

Research has shown that drivers who eat or drink at the wheel are more likely to crash due to the distraction involved. Additionally, you could be prosecuted for eating or drinking while driving if caught by a police officer who feels you are not in control of your vehicle.



Plan Your Route

Wherever possible, study your route before setting off to avoid the temptation of taking a quick glance at a map while driving.

If you plan on using a satellite navigation system always programme this before beginning your journey so that you do not need to operate it while in control of your vehicle.

Mind The Music

It might only take a few seconds to change a CD or tune a radio station but taking your eye off the road for any amount of time is dangerous. Wait until you pull over in a safe place before attempting to adjust the radio. You should also avoid listening to excessively loud music while driving as this can be distracting.

Listen To Your Feelings

You can be distracted by how you feel. If you are upset, stressed or fatigued you should not drive as your awareness of what is going on around you is likely to be affected.

Get Enough Sleep

Drivers who are sleepy are more likely to be distracted. As a guide most people need around 7 - 8 hours of sleep per night but this varies from person to person. If you often feel drowsy during the day then you are probably not getting enough sleep.

Don't Drive Impaired

Impaired drivers are dangerous drivers. Alcohol, drugs and some prescription medicines can reduce your ability to concentrate and reduce your ability to react to unexpected occurrences.



Make Adjustments Before You Leave

Make sure you position your seat correctly, adjust mirrors and put on your seat belt before setting off on your journey. Once you are on your way you should be 100% focused on driving so make sure anything that could distract you is dealt with before you depart.

- D** Driving requires full concentration.
- I** It is important to get enough sleep.
- S** Smoking while driving is a distraction. It's also harmful to health and prohibited in the company vehicle.
- T** Tell passengers why it is dangerous to distract you.
- R** Remember to scan your environment.
- A** Always plan your route before you set off.
- C** Changing CDs can be distracting.
- T** Talking on a phone while driving is dangerous.
- I** If you are upset or angry you are more likely to be distracted.
- O** Only tend to children once you have pulled over in a safe place.
- N** Never eat or drink while driving.

WARNING

Approximately 80% of collisions occur within three seconds of some kind of driver inattention, according to a study conducted by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.