

- Learn your stereo system well enough to use by touch and sound alone. When buying a car, opt for fingertip controls on the steering wheel and head-up displays for tuning, if available.
- Multi-disc CD players require less fiddling. Decide your listening mood before you start and load the machine.
- Preset radio stations and climate control.
- If you have passengers, pre-instruct them in the use of the controls and let them be your trained surrogate while you're behind the wheel.
- Check out pet restraint systems to limit injuries to them in crashes.
- Pull safely off the road and out of the way of oncoming traffic to deal with children.
- Don't get involved in inter-child arguments or who-started-it polemics. Forget the "Don't make me stop this car!" threats. Stop the car. Get it settled. You cannot be an upset driver and an alert driver at the same time.
- Forbid games that involve tossing a ball or anything else that might get under foot and interfere with the controls.
- Sure, play the alphabet game and the license tag game with them, but don't keep score. (You might get emotionally involved.)
- If you have to eat on the go, prepare simple finger foods in closed, spill-proof containers to reduce their distraction capability.
- Recognize driving requires your full attention. If you find your mind wandering, remind yourself to stay focused on the road.
- Before you get behind the wheel, familiarize yourself with the vehicle's equipment features.
- Do personal grooming at home, not in the car.
- Monitor traffic before engaging in activities that could divert attention away from driving.
- Ask a passenger to help you with activities that may be distracting.
- Review maps before hitting the road.
- If a serious incident occurs, immediately contact the nearest police agency by safely dialing 911.
- Be Alert. Be Aware. But,
- **Don't Be A Distracted Driver!**



**Here are some more web sites where you can read about and research the topic of Distracted Driving!**

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.54757ba83ef160af9a7ccf10dba046a0/>

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-13/newDriverDistraction.html>

<http://www.safedriver.com/dangers-distracted-driving-course.php>

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/DistractionsInEverydayDriving.pdf>

<http://www.aaapublicaffairs.com/Main/Default.asp?CategoryID=3&SubCategoryID=35&SearchString=distracted+driving>

<http://www.trafficsafety.org/distracted.asp>

[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Crime+Prevention+%26+Personal+Safety&L2=Traffic+Safety&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=programs\\_ghsb\\_RR&csid=Eeops](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Crime+Prevention+%26+Personal+Safety&L2=Traffic+Safety&sid=Eeops&b=terminalcontent&f=programs_ghsb_RR&csid=Eeops)

[http://www.mass.gov/rmv/rmvnews/2008/pr\\_032608roadrespect.htm](http://www.mass.gov/rmv/rmvnews/2008/pr_032608roadrespect.htm)

[http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/distracted\\_driving.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/distracted_driving.aspx)

<http://www.edmunds.com/advice/youngdrivers/articles/120513/article.html>

<http://www.roadtripamerica.com/DefensiveDriving/Rule18.htm>

<http://www.roadandtravel.com/safetyandsecurity/distractions.htm>

<http://www.usaedfoundation.org/KEYS.asp>

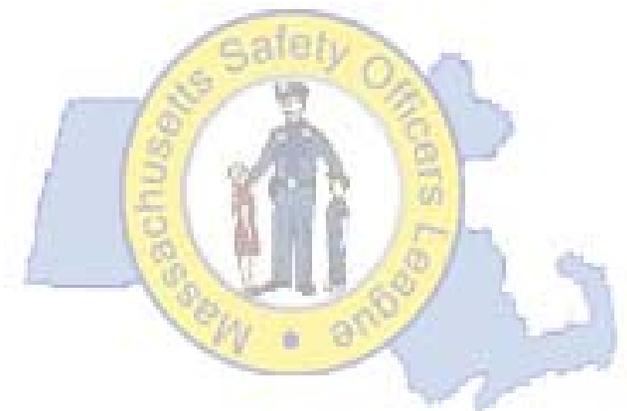
[http://www.streetsmarts-srv.com/resources/driving\\_distractions.htm](http://www.streetsmarts-srv.com/resources/driving_distractions.htm)

**MSOL Website**  
[www.masafetyofficers.org](http://www.masafetyofficers.org)

**MSOL Membership Application Website**  
<http://masafetyofficers.org/membership.htm>



# **The Dangers of Distracted Driving**



[www.masafetyofficers.org](http://www.masafetyofficers.org)

## Some Statistics to Consider.

According to a landmark research report released in 2006 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), driver inattention is the leading factor in most crashes and near-crashes. Nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. Primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities, such as cell phone use, and drowsiness. A 100-Car Naturalistic Driving Study tracked the behavior of the drivers of 100 vehicles equipped with video and sensor devices for more than one year. During that time, the vehicles were driven nearly 2,000,000 miles, yielding 42,300 hours of data. The 241 drivers of the vehicles were involved in 82 crashes, 761 near crashes, and 8,295 critical incidents. Four key analysis findings that focused on the types of driver inattention and their associated risks were released:

- The most common distraction for drivers is the use of cell phones. However, the number of crashes and near-crashes attributable to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening. Dialing is more dangerous, but occurs less often than talking or listening. Drowsiness is a problem that increases a driver's risk of a crash or near-crash by at least a factor of four. But drowsy driving may also be significantly under-reported.
- Reaching for a moving object increased the risk of a crash or near-crash by 9 times; looking at an external object by 3.7 times; reading by 3 times; applying makeup by 3 times; dialing a hand-held device (typically a cell phone) by almost 3 times; and talking or listening on a hand-held device by 1.3 times.
- Drivers who engage frequently in distracting activities are more likely to be involved in an inattention-related crash or near-crash. However, drivers are often unable to predict when it is safe to look away from the road to multi-task because the situation can change abruptly leaving the driver no time to react even when looking away from the forward roadway for only a brief time.

## The Five Most Common Driver Distractions

according to Road and Travel Magazine are:

1. Radio, CD and Cassette Players.
  2. Children.
  3. Pets.
  4. Oral Fixations like food and drinks.
  5. The Use of Cell phones and texting.
- The magazine suggests **Four Points To Recognize** that might help you to avoid driver distraction pitfalls.

**1. Recognize the risks of distractions.** The first step is to realize that any distraction carries risk with it. Your world may stop because you dropped the cassette on the floor, but the world you're driving in keeps motoring along.

### **2. Recognize your own signs of distraction.**

As you drive be self-watchful. Learn to spot the indicators that you are bored or inattentive. Check your mirrors. Scan the road ahead. What's on the left and right of you? If the scene has changed from the last time you checked, you've been inattentive!

### **3. Recognize that a distraction is just an attraction elsewhere that puts you in danger.**

When you see the lights and congestion of an accident in the opposite lane, resist the urge to look at it. Instead, pay attention to keeping your distance from the cars near you whose drivers could also be distracted by the lights and vehicles.

### **4. Recognize the limitations of attention.**

Good drivers know how to allot their limited attention to stay on top of any given situation. Once you realize how deadly distractions can be to you as a driver, you'll find new ways to keep your attention focused.

### **What about hands-free phones?**

Hands-free phones are not risk-free! Studies show that hands-free cell phones distract drivers the same as hand-held phones because it's the conversation that distracts the driver - not the device. In one study, drivers were given simple concentration exercises to do while driving. None required drivers to remove their eyes from the road. However, performing the exercises significantly diminished the drivers' ability to drive. Specific changes in driving behavior included tunnel vision, decreased road scanning, decreased speeds and decreased use of rear-view mirrors to monitor traffic on all sides of the moving vehicle.

## **The Massachusetts Safety Officers League, AAA, NHTSA, and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security offer these tips to avoid the Dangers of Driver Distraction.**

- Wear your safety belt. It's your best defense against an aggressive or distracted driver.
- Belt children in appropriate car seats.
- Avoid the temptation and reduce the risks of distracted driving.
- If you encounter an aggressive or distracted driver: control your emotions to avoid escalating the situation. Attempt to safely get out of his or her way and avoid eye contact.
- Try NOT to use a cell phone while driving. But, if you must:
- Use a hands-free device for the phone and keep your hands on the wheel.
- Familiarize yourself with the features of your cell phone *before* you get behind the wheel.
- Use the cell phone only when absolutely necessary. Limit casual conversations to times when you're *not* trying to operate a vehicle.
- Plan your conversation in advance, and keep it short - especially in hazardous conditions such as bad weather or heavy traffic.
- Understand that it is the conversation itself, not the phone that is the most serious distraction. Keep it light, terse and short.
- Realize that phone use of any kind slows your reaction time thus lengthening braking time! So, allow other cars more space.
- Let the person you're speaking with know you are in a moving vehicle.
- Do not engage in emotional conversations while trying to drive. Pull off the road to a safe spot before conversing emotionally.
- Do not combine distracting activities such as talking on your cell phone while driving, eating *and* tending to a child.
- Use message-taking functions and return calls when you are stopped at a safe location.
- Ask a passenger in the car to place the call for you and, if possible, speak in your place.
- Secure your phone in the car so that it doesn't become a projectile in a crash.