

SAFETY MATTERS

DRIVER SAFETY: DISTRACTIONS

DID YOU KNOW?

The two best strategies to steer clear of auto accidents due to driver distraction are to avoid any activity that diverts your full attention from the road and drive defensively.

By practicing safe driving techniques you can significantly reduce your chances of being involved in an auto accident.

MULTITASKING AT THE WHEEL

While there is little you can do to control other people's driving, there is plenty you can do to reduce your own distractions. Do not engage in any of the following while driving:

- Touching up makeup or hair
- Talking with other passengers to the point that you aren't watching the road
- Smoking
- Adjusting the radio or other audio devices
- Allowing your dog to sit on your lap
- Eating

STAY OFF THE PHONE

Cell phones are the most common driver distraction and result in countless accidents every year. Driving while talking on the phone is dangerous, because you cannot adequately divide your attention between the road and your conversation. If you must talk on your phone while driving, using a hands-free device will at least let you keep two hands on the wheel.

Even more dangerous than talking on the phone, texting while driving is comparative to drunk driving when it comes to decreased reaction time and impairment. You should always refrain from texting, checking e-mail or using your phone in any way while driving.

To combat the growing danger of phone use while driving, many states have enacted laws against texting and handheld use. Not only could you be endangering those around you but phone use while driving could also land you a hefty ticket.

GET PLENTY OF REST

Driving any distance requires you to be physically and mentally well-rested. Fatigue plays a large role in motor vehicle accidents and can be a major element in driving distractions. If you become drowsy, pull off the road and take a short nap.

KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING

Before you set out for a new location, familiarize yourself with the route. If you need to check your map or call for direction along the way, pull over before doing so.

DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE

Alcohol is the single greatest contributing factor to fatal motor vehicle accidents. Never drive while intoxicated. Be aware that some prescription medications may also have a debilitating effect.

PRACTICE DEFENSIVE DRIVING

In addition to avoiding distraction, you should give your full attention to driving defensively. This can help minimize the risk of an auto accident. It's important that you remain aware of other drivers around you and make adjustments to your driving accordingly.