

Distracted Driving Statistics in North America

Each day in North America, more than 12 people are killed and more than 1,217 people are injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver.¹ Distracted driving is driving while doing another activity that takes your attention away from driving. Distracted driving can increase the chance of a motor vehicle crash.

There are three main types of distraction:

- Visual: taking your eyes off the road;
- Manual: taking your hands off the wheel; and
- Cognitive: taking your mind off of driving.

•

Distracted driving activities include things like using a cell phone, texting, and eating. Using in-vehicle technologies (such as navigation systems) can also be sources of distraction. While any of these distractions can endanger the driver and others, texting while driving is especially dangerous because it combines all three types of distraction.

How big is the problem?

- In 2012, 3,328 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, compared to 3,360 in 2011. An additional, 421,000 people were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver in 2012, a 9% increase from the 387,000 people injured in 2011.
- In 2011, nearly one in five crashes (17%) in which someone was injured involved distracted driving.
- In December 2012, more than 171 billion text messages were sent or received in the US.

Distracted Driving

In Ontario, it is illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cell phones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. Find out the risks of distracted driving, which devices you can and can't use and the penalties you could incur.

Risks of distracted driving

Good drivers keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road. Research shows that drivers who use cell phones are **four times more likely to be in a collision** than drivers who focus on the road. And when drivers take their eyes off the road for more than two seconds, **their crash risk doubles.**

Ontario's distracted driving law

In Ontario, it's against the law to:

- operate hand-held communication and electronic entertainment devices while you're driving
- view display screens unrelated to your driving

Examples of hand-held devices include:

- iPods
- GPS and MP3 players
- cell phones
- smart phones
- laptops
- DVD players

What's hands-free?

Any device that you do not touch, hold or manipulate while driving, other than to activate or deactivate it. For example, actions such as dialing or scrolling through contacts, or manually programming a GPS device are not allowed.

Fines / Penalties

As of September 1, 2015 the fines and penalties for distracted driving will increase.

If convicted of distracted driving, a fully licensed driver (holder of Class A, B, C, D, E, F, G) or a hybrid driver (holder of a full-class license and a novice license such as Class G and M1) will receive:

- a fine of \$400, plus a victim surcharge and court fee, for a total of \$490 if settled out of court
- fine of up to \$1,000 if you receive a summons or fight your ticket
- three demerit points applied to your driver's record

If convicted of distracted driving, a novice driver (subject to the

Graduated Licensing program) will be subject to escalating sanctions:

- first occurrence will result in a 30-day license suspension
- second occurrence will result in 90-day license suspension
- license cancellation and removal from the Graduated Licensing System for a third occurrence

Novice drivers will not be subject to demerit points.

If you endanger others because of any distraction, including both hand-held and hands-free devices, you can also be charged with careless driving. If convicted, you will automatically receive:

- six demerit points
- fines up to \$2,000 and/or
- a jail term of six months
- up to two-year license suspension

You can even be charged with dangerous driving (a criminal offence), with jail terms of up to five years.

Exemptions

You can still use hand-held devices while driving in a few cases:

- in a vehicle pulled off the roadway or lawfully parked
- to make a 911 call
- transmitting or receiving voice communication on a two-way, CB or mobile radio (hand-mikes and portable radios like walkie-talkies require a lapel button or other hands-free accessory)

Type of device	Can I use it?
A cell phone with an earpiece, headset or Bluetooth device using voice-activated dialing.	Yes - only to activate or deactivate a "hands-free" function, and only if the device is mounted or secured. Actions like dialing or scrolling through contacts are not allowed.
A GPS screen	Yes - provided the GPS is mounted on the dashboard or windshield. You must input the required information <i>before</i> you start driving.
A portable media player plugged into the vehicle's sound system.	Yes - but you must activate the playlist before driving
Display screens that are built into the	Yes

vehicle and used for safety reasons.

Audio devices with screens that display still images.	Yes
---	-----

Ignition interlock devices.	Yes
-----------------------------	-----

Police, emergency medical services personnel, firefighters and enforcement officers can also use hand-held devices and viewing display screens when performing their duties.

Check the list below to find out if you can use your electronic device while driving:

Devices that can and can't be used while driving

In emergencies

Having a cell phone can be an important safety aid for drivers and passengers - whether for personal safety or for reporting a crime or a collision.

All drivers can use hand-held devices to call 911.

You should only use your cell phone in a situation that could result in a danger to your safety or the safety of others.

If you need to use your cell phone in an emergency, consider the following tips:

- Pull over safely if conditions allow.

- Keep emergency calls as brief as possible.

- Alert the caller that you are on the road.

- End conversations immediately if driving conditions or situations become hazardous (inclement weather, roadway construction, high-speed or high-volume traffic).

- Be alert to situations on the road where a cell phone's radio frequency and electronics may be potentially harmful, such as construction zones where blasting is occurring, or at gas stations and fuelling areas.

Tips to avoid distraction

There are many simple steps you can take to avoid being distracted while you drive:

Use your cell phone only when you're parked, or have a passenger take the call.

Let calls go to voicemail.

Turn off your cell phone before you start driving.

Identify and preset your vehicle's climate control, radio and CD player.

Plan your route and set your GPS before you leave.

When you're hungry or thirsty, take a break. Don't eat or drink while you drive.

Avoid other distractions like reading maps, grooming activities and tending to children and pets.

Recommended for you

Impaired driving

Safe driving practices

Understanding demerit points

Bill 31

Distracted Driving



A 2011 CDC study compared the percentage of distracted drivers in the United States and seven European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Overall, the study found that a higher percentage of U.S. drivers talked on the phone and read or sent emails or texts while driving than drivers in several other European countries.

CDC Distracted Driving Study

A CDC study analyzed 2011 data on distracted driving, including talking on a cell phone or reading or sending texts or emails behind the wheel. The researchers compared the prevalence of talking on a cell phone or texting or emailing while driving in the United States and seven European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Key findings included the following:

Talking on a cell phone while driving

- 69% of drivers in the United States ages 18-64 reported that they had talked on their cell phone while driving within the 30 days before they were surveyed.
- In Europe, this percentage ranged from 21% in the United Kingdom to 59% in Portugal.

Texting or emailing while driving

- 31% of U.S. drivers ages 18-64 reported that they had read or sent text messages or email messages while driving at least once within the 30 days before they were surveyed.
- In Europe, this percentage ranged from 15% in Spain to 31% in Portugal.

What are the risk factors?

- Some activities—such as texting—take the driver's attention away from driving more frequently and for longer periods than other distractions.
- Younger, inexperienced drivers under the age of 20 may be at increased risk; they have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.
- Texting while driving is linked with drinking and driving or riding with someone who has been drinking among high school students in the United States, according to a CDC study that analyzed self-report data from the 2011 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Students who reported engaging in risky driving behaviors said that they did so at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey.⁵ Key findings from the study revealed that:
 - Nearly half of all U.S. high school students aged 16 years or older text or email while driving.
 - Students who text while driving are nearly twice as likely to ride with a driver who has been drinking and five times as likely to drink and drive than students who don't text while driving.
 - Students who frequently text while driving are more likely to

ride with a drinking driver or drink and drive than students who text while driving less frequently.

What is being done?

- Many states are enacting laws—such as banning texting while driving, or using graduated driver licensing systems for teen drivers—to help raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to keep it from occurring. However, the effectiveness of cell phone and texting laws on decreasing distracted driving-related crashes requires further study.
- On September 30, 2009, President Obama issued an executive order prohibiting federal employees from texting while driving on government business or with government equipment.
- On September 17, 2010, the Federal Railroad Administration banned cell phone and electronic device use of employees on the job.
- On October 27, 2010, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration enacted a ban that prohibits commercial vehicle drivers from texting while driving.

In 2011, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration banned all hand-held cell phone use by commercial drivers and drivers carrying hazardous materials.

Distracted Driving in Canada

Distracted driving takes you away from the primary task of driving. Driving requires your full attention at all times. Below are some alarming statistics.

- **Cell phones are one of the most common distractions for drivers.** Drivers engaged in text messaging on a cellular phone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or near crash event compared with non-distracted drivers. (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 2010)
- **84% of distracted-driving-related fatalities** in the US were tied to the general classification of carelessness or inattentiveness (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2009)
- **80% of collisions and 65% of near crashes** have some form of driver inattention as contributing factors (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2010)
- **Distracted drivers are 3 times more likely** to be in a crash than attentive drivers (Alberta Transportation, 2011)
- Driver distraction is a factor in about **4 million motor vehicle crashes** in North America each year
- **Children are four times more distracting than adults** as passengers, and infants are eight times more distracting than adults as passengers
- Economic losses caused by traffic collision-related health care costs and lost productivity are at least **\$10 billion** annually. That's about 1% of Canada's GDP! (Government of Canada)
- In 2010, distracted driving was a contributing factor in **104 collision fatalities** in British Columbia (RCMP)
- International research shows that **20% to 30% of all collisions involve driver distraction** (Alberta Transportation, 2011)