



# 5 Minute Safety Talk



*Proud Member*

## Distracted Driving: Keep it Real, Keep it Safe

Take a minute to picture all the things that can affect your ability to focus when you're behind the wheel. Is the sun in your eyes or is it dark? Is fog, rain or snow making it hard to see? How about traffic and the condition of the pavement? Road construction? Pedestrians wandering into the street? These things are not in your control, and yet you have to pay attention to them in order to keep yourself and others safe on the road.

Now think about the distractions you can control. Juggling coffee and a doughnut. Searching for your favorite song on the radio. Programming your GPS. Talking on your cell phone. None of these activities are worth a crash, an injury or a life.

The use of electronic devices behind the wheel is all too common these days. In fact, many of these devices are built into our vehicle dashboards, making them seem safe to use. But research shows that using cell phones or dashboard touchscreen systems while driving is NOT safe – even if you're using them hands-free. When you're driving a piece of heavy machinery – whether it's a truck or your personal vehicle – taking your focus off the road for even a few seconds can be fatal.

For the past two years, more than 40,000 people a year have died in motor vehicle crashes, and over 1,000 are injured every day in crashes involving distracted drivers. You might be thinking, "So, what can I do? I sometimes have passengers with me, and they are just as distracting." That is actually not the case. Adult passengers can help keep you safe by being an extra set of eyes, scanning the same environment as the driver. So when a difficult maneuver is happening, your adult passengers understand if the conversation needs to stop. After all, your safety is their safety when they're riding along with you.

You may understand the danger electronic devices pose and avoid using them yourself while driving. But what about times when you've been in a vehicle with another person who has driven while distracted? Did you say anything?

As a passenger in a taxi or rideshare service, you may have encountered a situation where the driver spent the entire ride on the phone. It might feel awkward to say something to a stranger, but remember that you are the customer and deserve to be safe. When you hop in the car, you can simply say, “For your safety and mine, can you please not use your mobile devices while I’m in the car?”

Maybe the situation is a little more personal: riding with a co-worker or friend. Their phone rings and they reach to answer it. Again, it’s good to share that you care about both their safety and yours. You could say, “I’d appreciate it if you’d not use your phone while driving – it’s the safest choice for both of us.” Or, “Do you mind waiting until we are parked to make that call or send that text?”

If they are taking a business-related call, offer to do the talking so the driver can focus on the road. You might be a little embarrassed to speak up, especially if there are other co-workers in the vehicle too. But in a recent National Safety Council poll, 74% of respondents said they view distracted drivers as a major traffic safety concern. Odds are, others in the vehicle are just as concerned as you and they’ll appreciate you speaking up.

You may encounter a little pushback from people who think they’re great at driving while texting or talking.

**Here are a few quick statistics you can keep in mind to make these conversations easier.**

- Thousands of people needlessly die each year in distracted driving crashes – which are all preventable deaths.
- Up to 94 percent of crashes are caused by human error – shouldn’t we be operating at our best?
- When you are talking and driving – even hands-free – your brain can miss seeing up to 50 percent of your driving environment.
- Multitasking is a myth. Driving and phone conversations both require a great deal of thought. When doing them at the same time, your brain is unable to do either well.
- New studies show using voice-to-text is actually more distracting than typing texts by hand – you should never do either behind the wheel.



**DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH 2018**



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