



THE DISTRACTED DRIVER



While it has become nearly impossible to live without cell phones, most people underestimate the danger they can pose and often overestimate their own ability to use cell phones while driving or performing other tasks. Distraction can just be for a matter of seconds – if you are traveling at 55 mph, a mere five seconds will carry you the length of a football field. With the speed limit of 80 mph in South Dakota, you would travel nearly 150 yards in five seconds.

More than 3,000 people a year die in distracted-driving related crashes and another 400,000 are injured. Research has shown that text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times greater than driving while not texting. Texting has been involved in 18% of all distraction-related fatalities. Two of the most publicized cases include a 2008 case in California where a texting driver crashed into a train killing 25 people. A similar incident in Spain involved a texting driver and a train that killed 79 people.

Texting and driving has been banned in 45 states, 38 of which ban all cell phone use for novice drivers. While texting is the most common cause of distracted driving, other distractions include: taking selfies, eating, grooming, reading maps, loose pets, reaching for the radio or glove compartment, and talking to passengers in the back seat. The National Highway Safety Administration defines three main categories of distraction: Manual- which involves taking your hands off of the wheel. Visual-taking your eyes off of the road. Cognitive-not thinking about your driving. To avoid problems related to distracted driving, experts recommend the following:

- * Keeping full focus on driving
- * Limiting phone use to emergencies
- * Stopping to eat, use the phone, or use maps
- * Prepare in advance by securing pets and passengers
- * Make it a habit not to use your phone while driving

Distracted driving in one form or another has been around since the invention of the automobile. Cell phones have created a new form of distraction that we all need to be aware of and make sure it does not become a habit for us.

For Further Information:

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