

Distracted Driving

Driving is a skill that requires your full attention to safely operate your vehicle and respond to events happening around you. Driving involves constant and complex coordination between your mind and body. Events or things that prevent you from operating your car safely are distractions. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include, but are not limited to:

- Texting
- Using a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps;
- Watching a video
- Surfing the Internet.
- Using a navigation system

Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most high risk distraction. It is against the law for any person to read, write, or send a text message or electronic message while operating a vehicle.

Are you being driven to distraction?

- What do children, friends, and pets all have in common? All can be a dangerous distraction to you while you are driving.
- Teach your young children that driving is an important job and that you must concentrate when you are behind the wheel. If you need to attend to your children, pull over to a safe place. Don't try to handle children while you are driving.
- A carload of friends can be very distracting with loud talking, arguing over music selections, or horseplay. Arguments and other disturbing conversations should be held in a safe, appropriate place, not while you are driving in your vehicle.
- A loose pet in a moving vehicle can be very dangerous. Properly secure your pet in a pet carrier, portable kennel, or specially designed pet harness when you are driving. Never allow your pet to sit on your lap while you are driving your vehicle.

Turning Dials Can Turn Your Head

- Making destination entries on an in-vehicle navigation system, radio surfing for a good song, or adjusting your vehicle's climate controls are distracting activities that can put you in danger of a vehicle crash or near-crash. The availability of in-vehicle Internet and e-mail access from cell/smart phones, and other portable devices are added distractions that increase your risk of a crash if you engage in these activities while driving.
- Adjust vehicle's controls (climate controls, mirrors, radio, seat, etc.) before you begin to drive.
- Check your e-mail, voicemail, and any other portable devices you have before you begin driving, or when you reach your destination.
- Place an auto-reply message on your cell phone stating you are driving and will call them back later.

- Take advantage of normal stops to adjust controls.
- Ask your passengers to adjust the radio, climate control, navigation system, etc., for you.

Looks Can Kill ...

Looking out your window at what you are passing while you are driving can be a distraction if you are concentrating on getting a good look at:

- A crash scene
- A billboard advertisement
- A vehicle pulled over by law enforcement
- Street names and addresses
- Construction work
- A scenic view

Always focus on your driving. It's crucial that you remain alert while on the road to arrive at your destination safely.

Electronic Communication Devices

It is against the law for any driver of a noncommercial or commercial motor vehicle, on any highway or property open to the public for vehicular traffic, to use an electronic communication device.

Under the new law, while the vehicle is in motion, drivers are prohibited from:

- Physically holding or supporting a cellphone with any part of their body.
- Manually typing, writing, sending, or reading text-based messages.
- Recording, posting, sending or broadcasting video, including video calls and social media posts.
- Watching a video or movie.

The new law does allow drivers to:

- Place or receive voice calls utilizing voice-operated or hands-free functions that can be engaged/disengaged with a single touch or swipe
- Talk on the phone, hands-free, utilizing features like built-in phone speaker, in-car Bluetooth, or ear bud/headset
- Send or receive text-based communication through voice-to-text features
- Utilize cellphone GPS navigation and music or podcast functions
- Using a device to access or view a map for navigational purposes; or to access or listen to a broadcast or digital audio recording.
- Driver using a device to relay information through a transportation network company's digital network to a company driver provided the device is affixed or mounted to the vehicle.

Prior to January 1, 2025, drivers violating these provisions of use of an electronic communication device may be subject to a warning. After that date, a violation of these provisions may be subject to an infraction. Commercial drivers violating this section may be subject to disqualification. Fines and criminal penalties may also apply as defined by law in Section §304.822.6 RSMo.