

Driver Safety Letter

presented by



Pay Attention

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"I never saw him!" is one of the most common excuse heard after a collision. Was the other vehicle invisible? Virtually all collisions involve inattention on the part of one or both drivers. Inattention can involve many things, some of which are daydreaming, distractions, sleepiness, fatigue, "highway hypnosis," eating or drinking, talking, cell phones, blue tooth, and the like.

Such distractions are estimated to be a factor in 25-50% of all traffic crashes - or up to 8,000 crashes every day. In 2017 alone, distracted driving claimed 3,166 lives.

The average driver makes an estimated 200 decisions during every mile they drive. This leaves no room for multi-tasking while behind the wheel. If we are mentally solving work or family problems while driving, we are adding to our total cognitive workload. Other factors, such as fatigue, weather and traffic conditions, can increase the negative impact of distractions on driving ability.

Often, we can be distracted without realizing it. What are some of the warning signs that we're distracted? How many of these things have happened to you?

- You didn't remember driving from one place to another.
- You drifted in your lane or into another lane of traffic.
- You swerved suddenly to avoid an animal, a car or another highway hazard.
- You slammed on your brakes because you didn't see the car in front of you stop.
- You ran a stop sign or stop light unintentionally.

The good news about distracted driving is that it's almost always self-inflicted, the result of bad decisions or planning. That means it's preventable. How can we ensure we are mindful behind the wheel? It actually starts before we get behind the wheel.

- Being well rested and fully prepared ensures maximum focus. Don't wait until you are driving to plan your route, get directions or enjoy your meal. Plan before you go and leave a little earlier; it will help you to arrive at your destination safely and less stressed.
- Doing a proper pre-trip inspection ensures that like you, your equipment is in top shape and ready to roll. Make sure the mirrors, lights, wipers, climate control, electronic logging device are ready – and your seat belt is fastened – before you roll. Be sure to properly secure drinks, food, coolers and the like. And refrain from using your phone while on the road. If you need to have a conversation or respond to a text, pull off the road in a safe and secure area.
- Clear your mind of complex or emotional issues and/or conversations. If your mind actually is switching between tasks. It's not paying attention to multiple tasks at once.
- Constantly search the road ahead for situations that could require you to take action. Be conscious of potential problems. Driving is about anything happening any time and you need to remain alert to the possibilities. That means that you must anticipate what might happen next.

Being mindful allows you to see, recognize and avoid the hazards lurking on the road. And we're talking about the attention of both your eyes and your brain. It's not enough to look ahead of you; your brain has to be engaged on driving as well.

If any of this seems like a time-consuming inconvenience to you, imagine just how inconvenient a crash can be.

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