Eyes on the road, not distractions: Your guide to combating distracted driving.



Distracted driving has become a deadly problem in the U.S., contributing to more than 3,000 fatal traffic crashes each year. Part of the problem is that we're more easily distracted in general; according to the American Psychological Association, research has found that attention spans have become drastically shorter in the last two decades.

This has dire implications for our driving skills. For instance:

- Taking your eyes off the road for more than two seconds doubles your risk of a crash.
- Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds or more. At a speed of 55 mph, this is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.
- Eating or drinking while driving increases your crash risk by 80%.
- For teen drivers, the risk of death in a crash increases with the addition of every teen passenger in the car with them. Learn more about teens and distracted driving.

Distracted driving isn't all about phones.

We usually think of a distracted driver as one who is using their phone while driving. But the definition of distracted driving is much broader than that. A distraction is anything that takes our eyes or mind off the road, or our hands off the wheel. That means we can be distracted by passengers, things on the side of the road, a cheeseburger we're eating, or even a daydream we're having. (Learn the 7 most common driving

distractions.)

Four tips to prevent distracted driving.

Now for the good news: there are things you can do to improve your focus while driving. Start by following these four tips:

1. Go through our pre-drive checklist. Preparation is the best prevention for distracted driving. Before you ever leave your driveway or parking spot, ask yourself these questions:

- Is the heat or A/C set the way I want it?
- Is my radio or other music option set up?
- Is everything I need within easy reach? (Change for tolls, sunglasses, etc.)
- Are my side view mirrors clean and adjusted properly?
- If I'm using my GPS, is my destination already entered?
- Is my phone put away in the armrest console or set up for hands-free operation?
- Is my seat adjusted comfortably?

The less you fiddle with controls and search for items while driving, the more focused you can be. Never manually use your phone while driving and avoid hands-free use as much as possible — it's still mentally distracting.

2. Eat before or after you drive. Don't leave home starving, or you'll be tempted to hit a drive-thru. Eating while driving is one of the most common distractions and increases your risk for a crash. If you're hungry on your way home, either stop and eat inside a restaurant, or tough it out the last few miles.

3. Ask your passengers to keep it down. If your passengers are being loud and distracting, don't be afraid to ask them to stop. After all, they're hitching a ride with you, so your rules apply.

4. Don't drive in a compromised mental or physical state. Obviously, you should never drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, but it can also be dangerous to drive while angry, distraught, or drowsy. It's hard enough to avoid distractions when you're feeling good. So take the time to calm down, take a short nap, or do whatever you have to do to drive responsibly.

If you drive a commercial vehicle, or employ others who do, learn how you can prevent commercial distracted driving from putting others at risk. If we all take precautions to avoid distractions while driving, we can focus on staying safe.

To fully protect yourself, your family, and your business on the road, ask your local, independent agent about personal or business auto coverage from Patriot Insurance Company.

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