

Distracted Driving

Behavioral studies have shown that engaging in a secondary task disrupts driving performance. There are many ways to be distracted while driving, but one of the most talked about today is texting while driving.

Texting has become a growing trend and is quickly becoming one of the leading causes of death on the roadway. It has been reported that young drivers between the ages of 18-20 years old have more accidents because of the use of cell phones than any other age group. Besides texting, there are many other types of distraction, which includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Talking on a cell phone
- Eating
- Drinking
- Adjusting controls in the car
- Grooming
- Smoking

Texting requires visual, manual and cognitive attention so it is by far the most distracting. There are alarming statistics related to distractive driving. Texting while driving takes the driver's eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. If you do this while maintaining a speed of 55 mph, that amount of time is equivalent to the length of a football field. Texting while driving increases your risk of a crash by 23 times.

In 2011, 3,331 people were killed because of texting while driving. If you consider that at any given time more than 100,000 drivers are texting, this should instill a sense of fear in you and make you think twice before you drive and text.

In the State of West Virginia (WV Code 17C-14-15g), it is illegal to text and drive. As of July 1, 2013, it will be a primary offense for talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device. Texting while driving, even while at a stop light, is already considered a primary offense.

The fight to end distracted driving begins with you!

Contributed by:

Kimberly Hensley, Safety and Loss Control Specialist, WV Board of Risk and Insurance Management (May 2013)

Reference

www.distracted.gov