



ACCESSING SAFETY KNOWLEDGE (ASK) SHEET: *DISTRACTED DRIVING*

Have you ever grabbed a quick meal from a drive-through and eaten it on the road? Tried to put on makeup on your way to your next meeting? Do your kids ever talk to you from the back seat? Ever make a quick phone call to multitask while you drive? Tried to type in an address to your GPS system while on the move? Sent a text from behind the wheel saying you are on your way?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you've been a distracted driver. Distracted driving happens when people behind the wheel do anything that has the potential to distract them from the main task of driving. That can include texting, using a mobile phone, eating, drinking, grooming, reading, using a tablet or navigation system, watching a video, talking to passengers, or even changing the radio station.

There are three main types of distraction: visual, cognitive, and manual. Dangerous distractions include any action that takes your eyes off the road (visual), mind off the road (cognitive) or hands off the steering wheel (manual). Many actions involve more than one of these types of distraction. And drivers who engage more frequently in distracted driving are more likely to be involved in a vehicle crash.

As dangerous as these activities can be for all drivers, for younger and inexperienced drivers, distracted driving can be especially deadly. In fact, drivers younger than 20 have the highest rate of distraction-related fatal crashes. New drivers are especially vulnerable because they haven't had the experience needed to develop good safety judgment.

All drivers need to be aware that these activities are dangerous and keep their attention on the road.

What Can You Do to Stay Safe?

1. **Do not send or read texts while driving.** Because text messaging requires taking your eyes, hands and mind off the road, it is by far the most dangerous distraction. If you drive while sending or reading text messages, you are 23 percent more likely to be involved in a car crash than other drivers.

Think about the amount of time it takes to send a text message. Is it really "just a second?" The average text message takes a driver's eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds. At 55 miles an hour, that's like driving the length of a football field without looking where you're going. A crash typically happens within an average of three seconds after a driver is distracted.

2. **Forget the phone.** According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, cell phones are involved in 1.6 million auto crashes each year. These crashes cause a half million injuries and take 6,000 lives. A headset cell phone is not much safer than a handheld cell phone. The main risks with either kind of phone are answering, dialing and other tasks that lead you to take your eyes off the road or hands off the wheel. When you're in the car, put your phone where you can't get it and turn it off. If you can't hear it or reach it, you'll be less tempted to use it while you're driving. Or designate your co-pilot to text for you or manage your phone.
3. **Stay alert and focused.** Don't focus on anything other than driving. This includes objects outside the car, such as billboards and buildings, and objects inside the car, like a GPS or other electronic device, paperwork, people, or even food. People often take one or both hands off the wheel while juggling food or drinks.

Provided by the ASA – Houston Chapter Safety & Health Committee and **ADAMS**
INSURANCE SERVICE
P.O. Box 924943 • Houston, Texas 77292 • 281.679.1877 • asahouston.org • asa@asahouston.org

American Subcontractors Association-Houston Chapter is a collective voice for a diverse membership committed to quality, safety, and ethics in construction. ASA-HC advocates for legislative reform and provides educational opportunities for the subcontracting community.