



# APRIL IS NATIONAL DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH

## WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment, or navigation system — anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving. Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that is like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed. You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.



## STAGGERING STATICS

- According to NHTSA, between 2012 and 2019, nearly **26,004 people died** in crashes involving a distracted driver. While fatalities from motor-vehicle crashes decreased slightly from 2018, **distraction-related fatalities increased by 10%**.
- NHTSA reports that the number of **deaths linked to driver distraction was 3,142 nationwide**, or almost 9% of all fatalities in 2019. This represents a **10% increase** over the year 2018, or 284 more fatalities. The distraction figure was the largest increase in causes of traffic deaths. Distracted-driving crashes accounted for 15% of injury crashes and 14% of all police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2019.
- Texting while driving has become an especially problematic trend among younger drivers. In fact, **9% of drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in 2019 fatal crashes were reported as distracted**. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of the fatal crashes.
- In 2019, there were **566 nonoccupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, and others) killed in crashes** involving a distracted driver.

## SAFETY TIPS FOR DRIVING

- If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
- Designate your passenger as your “designated texter.” Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving.
- Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone’s “Do Not Disturb” feature, or put your cell phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your vehicle until you arrive at your destination.
- When you get behind the wheel, be an example to your family and friends by putting your phone away. Just because other people do it does not mean texting and driving is “normal” behavior. Instead, it is a selfish, deadly and, oftentimes, illegal activity that could kill you, a loved one, a friend, or a stranger.
- Always keep your hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.
- Do not let a phone call distract you from driving.
- Let incoming calls go to voicemail.

## GET INVOLVED AND END DISTRACTED DRIVING

We can all play a vital part to fight and save lives by ending distracted driving.

### TEENS

Teens can be the best messengers against distracted driving with their peers and to encourage them to sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to have their friends become involved in their local Student Against Destructive Decisions chapter. The messages can be shared on social media that reminds their friends, family, and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

### PARENTS

Parents must lead by example by never driving distracted and talk with their teen driver about distraction and all the responsibilities that come with driving.

### EDUCATORS AND EMPLOYERS

Educators and employers can spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students or employers to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.

### MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

If you feel strongly about distracted driving, be an advocate and a voice in your community by supporting local law enforcement, speaking out at community meetings, and highlighting the dangers of distracted driving on social media, local newspaper, radio announcement, etc.

Sources: Distracted Driving - NHSTA