



Technology allows us to make phone calls, dictate texts or emails and update social media while driving—all actions that are proven to increase crash risk. The National Safety Council observes April as Distracted Driving Awareness Month to draw attention to this epidemic. NSC wants to empower you to put safety first and Just Drive (at all times.)

Many distractions exist while driving, but cell phones are a top distraction because so many drivers use them for long periods of time each day. Almost everyone has seen a driver distracted by a cell phone, but when you are the one distracted, you often don't realize that driver is you.

New technology in vehicles is causing us to become more distracted behind the wheel than ever before. Fifty-three percent of drivers believe if manufacturers put "infotainment" dashboards and hands-free technology in vehicles, they must be safe. And, with some state laws focusing on handheld bans, many drivers honestly believe they are making the safe choice by using a hands-free device. But in fact, these technologies distract our brains even long after you've used them.

Multitasking is a myth. Driving and cell phone conversations both require a great deal of thought. When doing them at the same time, your brain is unable to do either well. For example, it's nearly impossible to read a book and have a phone conversation. While driving, this often results in crashes due to delayed braking times and not seeing traffic signals.

Cell phone crashes are under-reported. We know cell phone-related car crashes are a problem. We just don't know how big the problem is. Unfortunately, no breathalyzer-like test exists for cell phone use behind the wheel and drivers in crashes are often reluctant to admit use. This creates a huge gap in the data.

No Safe Way to Use a Cell Phone and Drive. Even when talking hands-free, drivers can miss seeing up to half of what's around them because they are engaged in a cell phone conversation. For the first time in nearly a decade, preliminary data from the National Safety Council estimates that as many as 40,000 people died in motor vehicle crashes in 2016. That marks a 6% increase over 2015 and a 14% increase over 2014—the most dramatic two-year escalation in 53 years.

An estimated 4.6 million roadway users were injured

seriously enough to require medical attention, a 7% increase over 2015. This means 2016 may have been the deadliest year on the roads since 2007. Estimated cost to society was \$432 billion.

NSC Survey Offers Insight into What Drivers are Doing. An NSC survey released Feb. 15 provides a glimpse at the risky things drivers are doing. Although 83% of drivers surveyed believe driving is a safety concern, a startling number say they are comfortable speeding (64%); texting manually or through voice controls (47%); driving while impaired by marijuana (13%) or driving after they feel they've had too much alcohol (10%).

Motor vehicle fatality estimates are subject to slight increases and decreases as data mature. NSC uses data from the National Center for Health Statistics, an arm of the CDC, so deaths occurring within 100 days of the crash and on public and private roadways—such as parking lots and driveways—are included in the estimates.

"Our complacency is killing us. Americans believe there is nothing we can do to stop crashes from happening, but that isn't true," said NSC President and CEO Deborah A.P. Hersman. "The U.S. lags the rest of the developed world in addressing highway fatalities. We know what needs to be done; we just haven't done it."

"It Was Just..."

It was just a quick call

It was just a short trip

It was just one drink

It was just a picture

It was just an email

It was just a glance

It was just a text

It was just a bite

'Just' is all it takes

