



Help Teens Identify and Reduce Distractions

New drivers face a big challenge behind the wheel; in fact, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety reports that for every mile they drive, teens are four times more likely to be involved in a crash than other drivers. Additionally, crash risk increases with the number of passengers.

Parents must model safe driving behaviors, and can teach teens to limit distractions and focus on the road.

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**LARAMIE COUNTY
SHERIFF**

Sheriff Danny L. Glick

**Distracted
Driving**
*Don't Become
Another Statistic*





Different Distractions, Same Results

Quick quiz: What do eating a hamburger, getting into a discussion, and reading a GPS screen have in common? Well, if you're doing any of these things while driving, you become distracted in ways that increase your risk of crashing. In fact, distractions come in three forms: visual, manual, and cognitive.

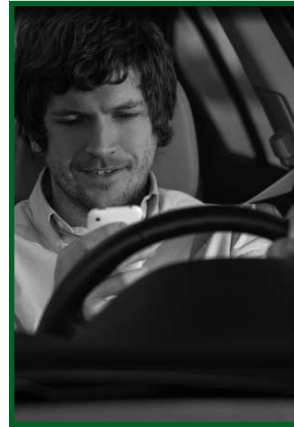
Visual distractions cause you to take your eyes off the road. When traveling at 65 mph, if you look at your GPS for two seconds to check where you are on the map, you'll have driven two-thirds the length of a football field before you see the road again. That gives you plenty of time and distance to get in a serious crash.

Manual distractions take your hands off the wheel. When you use one – or even both – of your hands to get that hamburger under control, you risk losing control over something much more important – your vehicle. You also are greatly slowing your ability to respond to changing or unexpected conditions that can occur without warning.

Cognitive distractions take your mind off the task at hand. When you get into a discussion – whether it's with a passenger or over the phone (hands-free or handheld) – your mind can become absorbed more with the discussion than with driving. Sometimes you don't even need another person to create a cognitive distraction. If you're upset or thinking about an important meeting, your body may be behind the wheel, but your head's not. So give yourself a break: Focus on driving and leave the other stresses behind.

What About Texting?

With more and more states banning handheld phone usage and texting while driving, and new technologies being developed to lock keypads and block other functionality of mobile devices when you're behind the wheel, you may be thinking that there's a big fuss being made about texting. And you're right, because texting while driving combines all three types of these distractions. When your eyes are reading the screen, your fingers are typing on the keypad, and your mind is busy crafting a message, you're not paying attention to driving and you're more likely to crash – 23 times more likely, in fact. But remember, although texting while driving is extremely dangerous, it's by no means the only activity that combines all three potentially lethal types of distraction, and just because something may not be illegal doesn't mean it's safe.



The AAA Foundation's fourth annual Traffic Safety Culture Index found that nearly 90 percent of motorists rated drivers talking on cell phones as a somewhat or very serious threat to their personal safety, and over 95 percent felt this way about drivers texting or emailing. Yet more than 2/3 of respondents also admitted to talking on a cell phone while driving in the past month, more than 1/3 admitted to reading a text or email in that time, and more than 1/4 admitted to typing or sending a text message or email while driving.

Don't Touch That Dial

Adjust seat positions, climate controls, sound systems, and other devices before you leave or while the vehicle is stopped. Know how your controls work, so if you must adjust something on the fly, you'll be less distracted. Use presets for radio and climate control, or have your passenger assist you.

Stop to Eat or Drink

Drive-through windows and giant cup holders make it tempting to have a meal while driving, but you're safer when you stop to eat or drink. Reducing your risk will be worth the time you spend.

Pull Over to a Safe Place to Talk on the Phone, Text Message or Email

Cell phones can be a great resource for getting help or reporting trouble. But, whether you use a handheld phone or a hands-free device, talking while driving causes you to take your mind off the task at hand (and sometimes your eyes and hands, too). Your best bet is to pull off the road to a safe spot before you use your phone to talk, text message, or surf the web. Be careful, because stopping on the road can be very dangerous. Find a safe area away from traffic. Learn how your phone's controls work in case an emergency call while driving is unavoidable. And practice good habits: Turn your phone off before you drive, so you won't be tempted to answer calls on the road.

Plan Ahead

Check directions and traffic conditions before you leave, so you'll be prepared for your journey. If you have a GPS, enter your destination information before departing, and pull over to a safe place if you need to make changes or review maps or route guidance. If possible, use a passenger as your navigator and assistant.

Don't Multi-Task and Drive

Driving is complicated enough -- you'll become distracted if you do other things, too. Don't use the vehicle's mirrors for personal grooming when the vehicle is in motion. Don't try to read or write while you're behind the wheel. Just drive.

Pull Over to Care for Children

Change the baby, feed the kids, and buckle them into their vehicle seats before you leave. If you need to attend to them, pull over in a safe place -- don't try to handle children while you're driving. a problem that affects YOU.

