

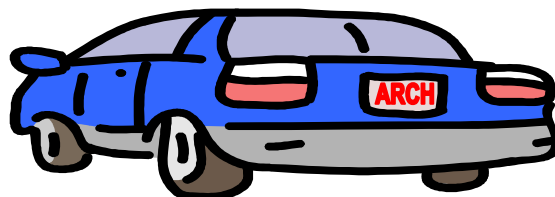
DRIVER SAFETY TIP INATTENTION

Have you ever tried to find a radio station or change a CD while driving? Have you ever eaten a meal while driving? Have you ever got so caught up in a conversation that you missed your turn – or worse, ran a red light? Have you ever seen other drivers reading the newspaper, or grooming themselves in the rear view mirror? Most of us have either observed or been guilty of multi-tasking behind the wheel. One experiment conducted at the University of Iowa showed that when text was read to drivers, their response time to brake lights from a vehicle in front of them increased 30%.

Driver distraction in its various forms contributes to an estimated 20 to 30 percent of all collisions. A U.S. Study published in 2001 determined driver distraction was a factor in about nine percent of serious or fatal crashes, based on police-reported crashes involving over 32,000 vehicles from 1995 to 1999. Close to 30 percent of the distraction-related crashes were attributed to something outside the vehicle – people, objects or events. Adjusting a radio, CD player or the like accounted for 11.4 percent. Other vehicle occupants were blamed in a further 10.9 percent; for example, dealing with children and having conversations with passengers. Eating or drinking led to 1.7 percent of distraction-related crashes, and 1.5 percent involved using a mobile phone.

So What Can You Do?

- ✚ **Be familiar with the equipment in your car.** Devices such as the temperature controls, audio system and cell phone can distract your ability to pay attention. This is especially important if you are in an unfamiliar vehicle like a rental car.
- ✚ **Make sure your kids are comfortable and properly buckled up.** To keep children from distracting the driver, provide them with safe items they may need for the road trip.
- ✚ **Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.** If you choose to use a cellular phone, use a hands-free device, keep it in its holder, and keep conversation to a minimum.
- ✚ **Pull over to eat or drink.** Give yourself a break from the traffic and enjoy. Someone choking on food or spilling coffee in the vehicle can take your attention off the road.
- ✚ **Groom before you drive.** Don't rely on the time in your vehicle to take care of things such as applying make-up, combing your hair or shaving.
- ✚ **Know your route before you leave.** If you are unfamiliar with where you're going, study those driving directions before starting so you are comfortable with your route.
- ✚ **Avoid emotional conversations,** either with passengers or on your mobile phone. Such discussions can lead to aggressive driving behavior.
- ✚ **Never try to write while driving.** Always find a safe place to stop before writing things down.
- ✚ **Secure your cargo.** That includes packages and pets. Use pet carriers for your animals. Secure packages and other items in the trunk or within cargo containment areas.



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