



D I S T R A C T E D D R I V I N G

Issue

Distracted driving is a major contributor to motor vehicle crashes, deaths and injuries on our roads. The use of electronic devices for communications (such as text messaging and video calls) and entertainment (such as apps and video streaming) can readily distract drivers from the driving task as found by safety research, studies and data.

Impact

In 2021, 3,522 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver according to NHTSA, accounting for 8% of all crash fatalities. Nonoccupants (pedestrians, pedalcyclists, and others) accounted for almost 18% (644) of distraction-affected fatalities in 2020.

Solutions

Laws, Technology,
and Roadway Safety
Infrastructure

Comprehensive State Laws to Deter Distracted Driving

Safety Technologies and Improved Safety Standards Can Protect Vehicle Occupants and Other Road Users

- Proven collision avoidance systems in vehicles including AEB, LDW, BSD, rear AEB, and rear-cross traffic alert should be required.
- Driver monitoring systems (DMS) for passenger motor vehicles can help to prevent and/or mitigate crashes caused by impairment, fatigue, distraction, driver disengagement, automation complacency, and the foreseeable misuse of automated driving systems.

Road Safety Infrastructure Improvements and the Safe System Approach



DISTRACTED DRIVING

The Facts

- Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted imposed an economic cost of \$98.2 billion in 2019. Adjusted for inflation only, that amounts to \$119.78 billion in 2023 dollars. In 2018, distracted driving crashes cost employers nearly \$19 billion.
- The true impact of distracted driving remains unclear due to issues with the underreporting of crashes involving distraction, including differences in police crash report coding and database limitations.
- Crash risk increases dramatically – as much as four times higher – when a driver is using a mobile phone, with no significant safety difference between handheld and hands-free phones observed in many studies.
- A study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that text messaging increased the risk of a safety-critical driving event (i.e., crashes, near-crashes, crash-relevant conflicts, and unintentional lane deviations) by 23.2 times.
- Sending or receiving a text message causes the driver's eyes to be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. When driving 55 miles per hour, this is the equivalent of driving the entire length of a football field blind.
- According to NHTSA, the percentage of drivers visibly manipulating handheld devices while driving increased by 127% between 2012 and 2021.
- The findings of the following three surveys confirm the prevalence of device use while driving:
- A February 2022 survey commissioned by State Farm found that among licensed drivers:
 - » 55% “always” or “often” read or send text messages while driving.
 - » 51% “always” or “often” hold the phone while talking.
 - » 49% “always” or “often” interact with cell phone apps.
- A March 2022 survey commissioned by Advocates and Selective Insurance Group found:
 - » 70% of licensed drivers have used a mobile device while driving for personal reasons in the last 90 days.
 - » Nearly one in three Americans (31%) have either been in or know someone who has been in a crash that occurred while a driver was using a mobile device.



Over recent years, smart phone capability and usage and the broadening range of distracting electronic communication platforms and options (including apps, social media, gaming, video chatting) have grown rapidly. Device use can also be accomplished without holding or consistently physically engaging with a device (voice-to-text and/or dash mounted options). Laws that ban handheld device use yet broadly permit hands-free use, including distracted viewing activities, exacerbate cognitive and visual distraction. Distracting viewing should be restricted.

- » More than half of Americans have seen people driving while distracted by a mobile device in the past two weeks (56%).
- » When asked about strategies to effectively reduce distracted driving or its impacts, 58% indicated advanced safety technologies and 50% affirmed comprehensive state laws.
- A March 2022 survey commissioned by Nationwide Insurance found that:
 - » 34% of drivers believe it is very safe to hold your phone while driving.
 - » Half of those surveyed (51%) had held a cell phone to talk, text or use an app while driving, despite 66% saying that such behavior is dangerous.

[Click here to learn more](#)



DISTRACTED DRIVING

Advocacy

Des Moines Register

**“Opinion: A distracted driver killed my children.
The Iowa Legislature can save yours.”**

3/29/21

THE CRASH THAT CHANGED NINA’S LIFE

In 2010 Nina Todd was doing what most American families do on Thanksgiving, joining family to celebrate the holiday. As she drove home afterward, she made plans with her kids to put up a Christmas tree. But within seconds, her life changed. A distracted driver, who was texting while attempting to pass two cars in a no passing zone at the crest of a hill, slammed head on into the family’s car. Nina suffered a disabling injury. Her two sons, Alex, 4, and Maliki, 5, tragically died in the crash.

Nina does not want any lowan to ever have to feel the pain she was forced to endure. She has worked tirelessly at the state capitol each year to get a new distracted driving law enacted. Nina also has penned op-eds, participated in roundtables, promoted awareness of distracted driving, and pushed to enact solutions.

LOOKING TO 2024

Nina has worked relentlessly with Stopdistractions.org, among other national and local groups, to upgrade Iowa’s distracted driving law. While some success in advancing the legislation has been made, the upgrade has not yet been enacted. Safety advocates hope to build on the current momentum to advance a bill to the governor’s desk in 2024.

[Advocates](#) will work with Nina and distracted driving activists across the nation to ensure comprehensive distracted driving laws cross the finish line as well as to continue our efforts to ensure the rule for AEB in new vehicles is swiftly issued and to advance a requirement for driver monitoring technology to curb distraction behind the wheel.



Nina and her sons Alex and Maliki



