



DISTRACTED DRIVING

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 2022, 3,308 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver according to NHTSA, accounting for 8% of all crash fatalities. Nonoccupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, and others) accounted for almost 19% (621) of distraction-affected fatalities in 2022.

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 partial driver automation 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. Updated for inflation alone, in 2024, the economic cost would be \$120.32 billion. According to a report from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) that used incident data from 2018, distracted driving crashes cost employers nearly \$19 billion in 2019 dollars. Updated for inflation alone, in 2024, the economic cost would be \$23 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 phone use 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 (mph), this is the equivalent of driving the entire length of a football field with your eyes closed.
- According to NHTSA, the percentage of drivers visibly manipulating handheld devices while driving increased by 82% between 2013 and 2022.
- 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.
 - 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:
 - 34% of drivers believe it is very safe to hold your phone while driving. This finding was most pronounced among Gen Z and Millennials (39%).
 - 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

Distracted Driver Sounds Alarm for Others



[Triad text and driving crash survivor advocates for safe driving laws](#)

4/28/23

A TERRIBLE MISTAKE TURNS INTO A LIFE'S MISSION

On October 17, 2012, Tasha Hairston-Springs was eagerly looking forward to a date, texting with her daughter as she drove. However, Tasha's life was forever altered because she took her focus off the task of driving. While traveling at 70 miles per hour, Tasha crashed into an underpass, then collided with another vehicle. The impact sent her SUV airborne, partially ejecting Tasha, who was not wearing a seat belt, from the car. While no lives were lost, Tasha suffered devastating, permanent injuries, losing parts of her ear and face.

The weight of knowing her actions could have killed others shook Tasha to her core. Though she continues to struggle with that guilt, she channels it into a powerful mission. In 2018, she founded Mindfully Aware Driving Solutions, and she travels across North Carolina, sharing her story in hopes of sparing others from similar tragedies, while advocating for stricter distracted driving laws.



Tasha Hairston-Springs was treated for severe injuries from her crash in 2012

LOOKING TO 2025

Tasha plans to expand the reach of Mindfully Aware Driving Solutions nationally and use her story to inspire more people to change dangerous distracted driving habits. She also will continue efforts to strengthen North Carolina's distracted driving law. A bill made progress in the last session, and she is optimistic that similar legislation will succeed in 2025. Additionally, Tasha will continue in her role as advocacy and outreach director at the African American Women Trucking Association. Advocates will work with activists like Tasha to urge states to enact comprehensive distracted driving laws, and we will continue to pressure the U.S. Department of Transportation to issue a Final Rule for AEB in large trucks, among other needed safety advances. We also continue to support a requirement for driver monitoring technology to curb the deadly habit of distracted driving.



Tasha speaking at a press conference at the North Carolina General Assembly in 2019



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The Solutions - Laws Rating Chart and Map

GOOD

State has both optimal laws
– 28 states plus DC

CAUTION

State has one optimal law
– 18 states

DANGER

State has zero optimal laws
– 4 states

● Optimal law adopted

OPTIMAL LAWS	STATE RATING	AL	AK	AZ	CA	CO	CT	DC	DE	FL	GA	HI	IA	ID	IL	IN	KS	KY	LA	MA	MD	ME	MI	MN	MO	MS	MT	NC	ND	NE	NH	NJ	NM	NV	NY	OH	OK	OR	PA	RI	SC	SD	TN	TX	UT	VA	VT	WY	WV	WI	WY	TOTAL				
	All-Driver Text Messaging Restriction	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
GDL Cell Phone Restriction	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	28 + DC		

Colorado enacted a new distracted driving law and no longer receives credit for a GDL cell phone ban.

