



# New Distractions for Drivers— A Growing Concern

**Distracted driving** is the practice of driving a motor vehicle while simultaneously engaged in another activity. Distractions may include, but are not limited to, talking or texting on a cell phone, grooming, eating and drinking, changing radio stations, talking to passengers, watching a video, and using a navigation system.

## How do distractions affect drivers?

When motorists add distracting tasks to driving, their action pulls mental resources away from the primary task and deteriorates performance. Such distractions can be categorized into:<sup>1</sup>

- 1 Visual distractions:** Tasks that require the driver to look away from the roadway to visually obtain information.  
→For instance, looking at the car navigation display for directions.
- 2 Manual distractions:** Tasks that require the driver to take a hand or hands off the steering wheel and manipulate a device.  
→For instance, switching a radio channel.
- 3 Cognitive distractions:** Tasks that involve thinking about something other than the driving task.  
→For example, having a conversation on the cell phone.

The impact of distraction on the driving task is determined not only by type, but also the frequency and duration of the task.<sup>2</sup> Most notably, texting while driving falls into all three distraction categories above. A 2009 study by Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) found that on average a driver's eyes are taken off the road for 5 seconds while texting. The research indicated that drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than non-distracted drivers.<sup>3</sup>



## By the Numbers— NATIONWIDE

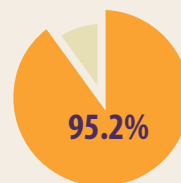
### DISTRACTED DRIVING CRASHES

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that in 2014 distracted driving resulted in:<sup>4</sup>

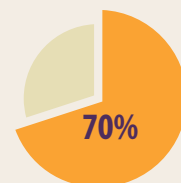
**3,179** **431,000**  
FATALITIES INJURIES

### DISTRACTED DRIVING SURVEY

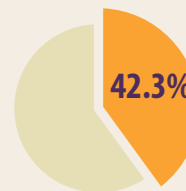
A 2015 American Automobile Association (AAA) survey of 3,405 U.S. residents found:<sup>5</sup>



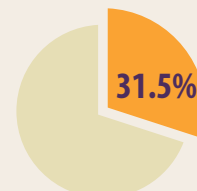
Consider it "unacceptable" for a driver to text or email while driving.



Admitted to talking on the phone while driving during the past 30 days.



Admitted to reading text messages or emails.



Sent a text or email while driving during the past 30 days.

1 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Policy Statement and Compiled FAQs on Distracted Driving" Web page. Accessible at: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/edgesuite-staging.net/Driving+Safety/Distracted+Driving/Policy+Statement+and+Compiled+FAQs+on+Distracted+Driving>  
2 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Overview of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Driver Distraction Program, DOT HS 811 299 (Washington, DC: April 2010). Accessible at: [http://www.nhtsa.gov/edgesuite-staging.net/staticfiles/nti/distracted\\_driving/pdf/811299.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.gov/edgesuite-staging.net/staticfiles/nti/distracted_driving/pdf/811299.pdf)  
3 Sherri Box, "New data from Virginia Tech Transportation Institute provides insight into cell phone use and driving distraction," Virginia Tech News, July 29, 2009. Accessible at: <https://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2009/07/2009-571.html>

4 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Distracted Driving 2014, DOT HS 812 260 (Washington, DC: April 2010). Accessible at: <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812260>  
5 American Automobile Association (AAA), 2015 Traffic Safety Culture Index, (Washington, DC: February 2016). Accessible at: [http://publicaffairsresources.aaa.biz/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/TSCI\\_2015\\_REPORT.pdf](http://publicaffairsresources.aaa.biz/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/TSCI_2015_REPORT.pdf)

## Distracted Driving in Connecticut

Connecticut uses several overarching strategies to reduce distracted driving:<sup>6</sup>

**STATUTES:** The State of Connecticut passed strict laws against distracted driving, which include banning texting while driving and requiring any mobile phone use to be hands-free.

**ENFORCEMENT:** The Connecticut State and municipal police run aggressive, high-visibility distracted driving enforcement campaigns on both State and local roads during the months of April and August.<sup>7</sup>

**OUTREACH:** Connecticut's transportation agencies provide education, discussion, and interactive driving simulation for teens. The State also runs media campaigns to support enforcement efforts and raise awareness of the dangers of distracted driving for all motorists.

### By the Numbers-CONNECTICUT

#### More than 50 law enforcement agencies

worked overtime to enforce Connecticut's hand-held mobile phone ban in 2016.

The "Save a Life Tour" reached

**30,000**

Connecticut high school students in the 2014-15 academic year.

The 2016 Distracted Driving Campaign was covered by more than 50 online news articles and 3 radio interviews.

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*"We're making gains. Considering the seriousness of the problem and the fact that we saw movement in the right direction is a sign we need to continue distracted driving enforcement."*

Fernando C. Spagnolo  
Deputy Chief  
Waterbury Police Department

### 2016 Distracted Driving Campaign

In 2016, Connecticut used the following strategies to implement an aggressive distracted driving campaign:<sup>4</sup>

- 1 High Visibility Enforcement (HVE).** Connecticut paired high-visibility law enforcement activities with a media campaign using the NHTSA slogan "U Drive. U Text. U Pay."
- 2 Public outreach and education campaigns.** Connecticut's Highway Safety Office (HSO) developed products to be used throughout the year that provide educational "social norming" messaging to raise motorists' awareness of the dangers of distracted driving. This campaign is known as "SubtraCT the Distraction."
- 3 Educational programming for high schools and younger drivers.** The HSO worked with the "Save a Life Tour" to bring this educational programming about the dangers of mobile phone use and distracted driving to high schools and younger drivers across the State.

#### Campaign Outcomes:

- Received extensive media coverage.
- Cited more than 12,000 distracted drivers.
- Reduced cell phone use by 9 percent, according to surveys from the 2015 and 2016 campaigns.

6 Connecticut Department of Transportation, Bureau of Policy and Planning, Highway Safety Office, State of Connecticut Highway Safety Plan: 2016 (Newington, CT: 2015). Available at: [http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dtransportation\\_safety/plans/ct\\_fy16\\_hsp.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dtransportation_safety/plans/ct_fy16_hsp.pdf)

7 Connecticut Department of Transportation, "The Connecticut Highway Safety Office Kicks Off National Distracted Driving Awareness Month with Increased Enforcement," News Release (April 7, 2016). Available at: <http://www.ct.gov/dot/cwp/view.asp?A=1373&O=578904>