



Army Safety Gram

ARMY SAFE IS ARMY STRONG



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Distractions: They're Everywhere

As good as cell phones might be for instant communication, they contribute to bad driving. It is becoming increasingly clear that talking on a cell phone distracts a driver from seeing hazards and responding quickly. Have you ever driven behind a slow vehicle, and then passed it only to see a cell phone conversation taking place? Minutes later the driver speeds past you because he just hung up? Aggravating isn't it? It's also a serious hazard.

Drivers can't afford to be distracted by cell phones or anything else. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in the United States says some form of driver distraction is a contributing factor in 20 to 30 per cent of vehicle crashes.

Some common driving distractions include:

- ◆ Cell phone use
- ◆ Reading or sending text messages
- ◆ Reaching for a moving object inside the vehicle
- ◆ Looking at an object or event outside of the vehicle
- ◆ Reading a newspaper, map, or document
- ◆ Applying makeup
- ◆ Playing with the GPS or other electronic gadget

Here are some reminders for driving safely without distractions:

- ◆ Make sure you, and the workers you supervise, use cell phones safely. The safest thing is to make your calls before you set out. If you receive a cell phone call while you are driving, let the caller leave a message, pull over, and call that person back. Reinforce this safety policy by issuing regular reminders and by setting a good example.
- ◆ Consider how your children might be observing your unsafe habits and thinking of them as something normal that everyone does. If you don't want your children jabbering away on cell phones while they are driving, don't let them see you doing it, ever.
- ◆ Be aware that using a hands-free, voice-activated cell phone can still distract you.
- ◆ Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- ◆ Never read or send text messages while driving.
- ◆ A safe driver also stops before checking maps and addresses, looking at paperwork, and dealing with similar distractions.
- ◆ Even eating, drinking, fiddling with the radio or vehicle sound system, adjusting heaters and digging items out of the glove box while driving have caused vehicle crashes.
- ◆ Arguments or stressful conversations with passengers can also divert the driver's attention from the road. We know better than to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but fatigue, stress and strong emotions such as anger can also impair the ability to drive safely.



Don't let yourself get distracted while driving. Keep your mind on your driving; keep your eyes on the road, and your hands on the wheel! Your life and the life of other drivers around you may just depend on it.