

## SAFETY TALK

Date:

**Environmental Health and Safety Newsletter** 

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## **Distracted Driving**

More than 700 injury crashes involve distracted driving on a typical day in the U.S. While the percentage of drivers using handheld devices has decreased in recent years, many experts feel the use of distracting devices is significantly undercounted. Fact is, drivers frequently lose focus of the road. Their eyes drift and their minds wander as they connect on cell phones or other technologies built into vehicle dashboards.

Research shows just listening to a cell phone conversation decreases brain activity associated with driving by more than one-third, leading to safety performance issues, such as the inability to react quickly in congested driving zones. Think of it as driving blindfolded.

Of course, using electronics is not the only way drivers can be distracted. What things do drivers do that may be distracting?

- Talking or texting on the phone
- Eating or drinking
- Applying makeup or shaving
- Reading a newspaper or book
- Watching a video
- Programming a GPS

All of these examples fit under one of the following distraction categories: visual, manual (taking a hand off the wheel) or cognitive (taking your mind off driving). All can raise safety risks, not only for drivers but also for those sharing the road around them. Hands-free devices may be marginally safer than handheld ones, but the safest choice of all is not using your cell phone or other technology while you are driving.

## To Sum It Up

The human brain cannot handle two thinking tasks at the same time, such as driving and talking on the phone. Your brain toggles quickly between these two tasks. When driving, this can slow reaction time and cause crashes. Be safe by silencing your phone, programming your GPS and setting up your radio or music while you still are parked.

1 https://www.cmu.edu/news/archive/2008/March/march5\_drivingwhilelistening.shtml

Department:	
Supervisor (please print):	
Supervisor Signature:	
Employee Participants:  **Please Print Clearly**	Signature

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Please share the safety talk, for the noted month, with your employees and sign off on this form. All others should read for themselves. Completed forms shall be kept on file by the department.