

# Don't be a distracted driver

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near-crashes attributed to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening.

Accident rates have increased thanks to texting, which involves a person taking his or her hands and eyes off of the road. A 2009 study by Car and Driver magazine compared the dangers of texting while driving to the effects of driving drunk to see which would be more dangerous under the same conditions. Measuring the time it takes to brake after being alerted by a red light to stop, the reaction time was recorded when the driver was legally drunk, reading an e-mail and sending a text. Texting easily elicited the slowest response time.

Ironically, in January 2011, Texas man Chance Bothe drove off of a cliff after texting that he had to stop texting or risk dying in a car accident. Bothe survived but sustained significant injuries and had to be revived from death three times.

## Moving Objects

Whether there's a pet bouncing in

the front seat or children being boisterous in the back, passengers and items moving around the car are significant distractions. Turning around to look at the kids or to reach for a ball that may be rolling around on the floor of the car can take a person's eyes off the road. If something really is important and needs to be addressed, it is much safer to pull over and take care of it before getting back on the road.

## Daydreaming

Many people will admit to daydreaming behind the wheel or looking at a person or object outside of the car for too long. Perhaps they're checking out a house in a new neighborhood or thought they saw someone they knew on the street corner. It can be easy to veer into the direction your eyes are focused, causing an accident. In addition to trying to stay focused on the road, some drivers prefer the help of lane departure warning systems.

## Eating

Those who haven't quite mastered walking and chewing gum at the same

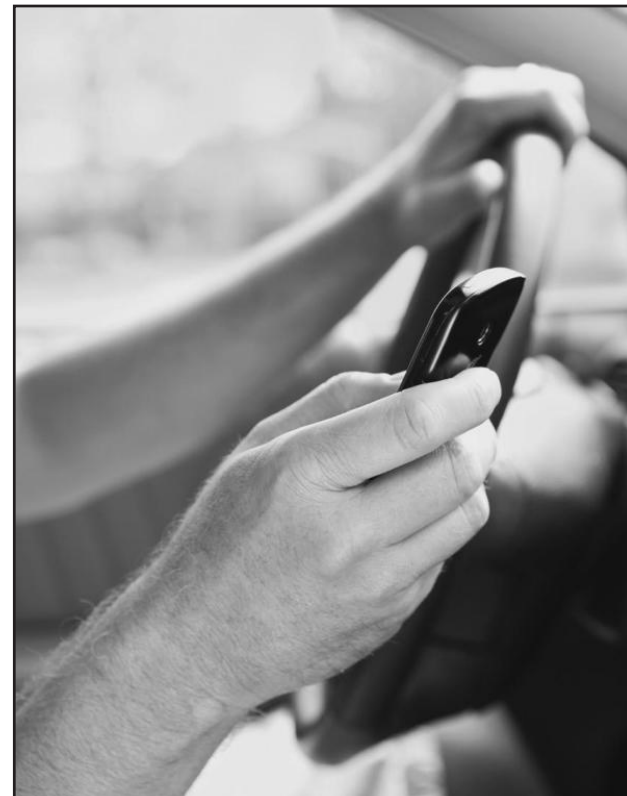
time may want to avoid eating while driving. The majority of foods require a person's hands to be taken off of the wheel and their eyes to be diverted from the road. Reaching in the back seat to share some French fries with the kids is also distracting.

Try to eat meals before getting in the car. For those who must snack while en route, take a moment to pull over at a rest area and spend 10 minutes snacking there before resuming the trip.

## Reading

Glancing at an advertisement, updating a Facebook status or reading a book are all activities that should be avoided when driving. Even pouring over a traffic map or consulting the digital display of a GPS system can be distracting.

*When driving, attention should be placed on the task of safely getting from point A to point B. All other activities taking place in the vehicle are distractions that can end up risking a person's life.*



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