

# The fewer the distractions, the safer the drive.



At any given daylight moment, approximately 660,000 Americans are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving.<sup>2</sup>

Talking to a passenger or adjusting the radio may seem insignificant, but these actions take attention away from the primary task of operating a vehicle. Any distractions, whether for a minute or just a few seconds, can endanger the lives of the driver, his or her passengers, other drivers and even bystanders.

There are three main types of driving distractions:

- **Visual** — Taking your eyes off of the road ahead
- **Physical** — Taking one or more hands off of the steering wheel to perform another task (e.g., reaching, eating, drinking, dialing a phone)
- **Cognitive** — Taking your mind off of the task of driving

Most people understand that taking their eyes off the road can lead to a crash, but many underestimate the danger of cognitive distraction. Multitasking is often defined as performing several tasks at once, but in “The Great Multitasking Lie: Myth versus Reality,” the National Safety Council makes the case that the human brain cannot do two things at the same time.”<sup>1</sup>

What we might think of as multitasking is really our minds switching back and forth between complex problems very quickly, an activity commonly referred to as toggling. Unfortunately, even the speediest toggler can still suffer from inattention blindness while driving because his or her brain is not entirely focused on the road. This condition is obvious in hindsight when an affected driver can't recall seeing the traffic light as red, or didn't see the stop sign at an intersection.

## Some examples of common distractions.

- Texting or talking on a cell phone
- Eating and drinking
- Conversations with passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using an electronic navigation system
- Adjusting a radio, CD player or MP3 player

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Multitasking Lie*, National Safety Council, <http://www.nsc.org/learn/NSC-Initiatives/Pages/distracted-driving-the-great-multitasking-lie-infographic.aspx> (downloaded 5/24/16).

<sup>2</sup> *NHTSA Survey Finds 660,000 Drivers Using Cell Phones or Manipulating Electronic Devices While Driving at Any Given Daylight Moment*, Press Release, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (4/5/13).

## Commercial Fleet Safety: Distracted Driving

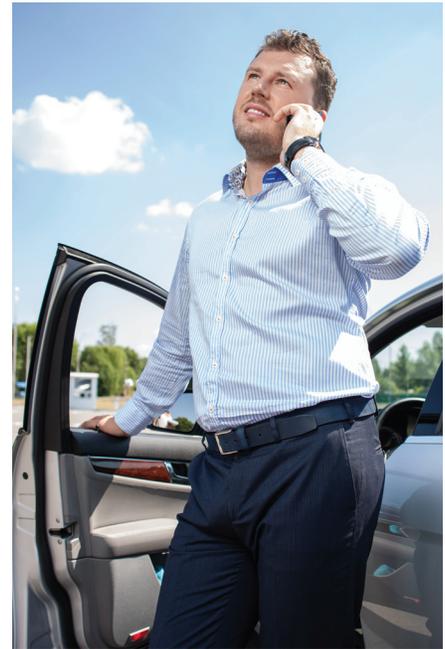
### Steps you can take to help promote driving safety.

In an ideal world, you'd eliminate every distraction that takes your drivers' focus away from the road. Since that's not practical, here are some tips to consider as you find what works best for your business:

- Include guidance on ways to avoid distracted driving in your company's driver's handbook
- Ask your employees to sign a pledge form indicating their willingness to drive in a safe and courteous manner at all times
- Remind managers and supervisors not to initiate calls to employees when they would reasonably know that they're driving
- Monitor the daily performance of individual operators (e.g., telematics, How's My Driving? program, camera-in-cabin systems)
- Consider using devices and applications that lock down phones, tablets and other electronic gear while in motion; some cellular providers have free apps that make it easy for a device to respond automatically on the driver's behalf
- Encourage drivers to identify a safe place to stop, away from traffic, if they have a genuine need to place a call
- Use training or other appropriate actions to bring drivers that violate company safe-driving policies into compliance
- Educate drivers on the benefits of adjusting their lifestyle choices to include: proper nutrition; tailored sleep environment; a fitness program; targeting ideal weight; use of time management to get consistent rest each night; avoiding regular/heavy consumption of caffeine, nicotine and alcohol (which interferes with restorative sleep)

### Additional resources for employers.

- **Centers for Disease Control** — [cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted\\_driving/index.html](http://cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/index.html)
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration** — [distraction.gov/](http://distraction.gov/)
- **Network of Employers for Traffic Safety** — [trafficsafety.org](http://trafficsafety.org)
- **National Safety Council** — [nsc.org](http://nsc.org)



If drivers must make a call, they should identify a safe place to stop, away from the roadway.

Providing solutions to help our members manage risk.<sup>SM</sup>

For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or [LCS@nationwide.com](mailto:LCS@nationwide.com).