



# 10 Tips for Managing Driver Distraction

Distracted drivers pose a deadly risk to everyone on the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that in 2011, the most recent year for which data is available, **3,331 people lost their lives** and another **387,000 were injured** in distraction-affected crashes.<sup>1</sup> Drivers engage in a range of distracting activities from talking and texting on their phones, to eating, grooming and reading. Even the use of hands-free technologies isn't without risk as dangerous mental distractions exist even when drivers keep their hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.<sup>2</sup>

Here are **10 tips** for managing some of the most common distractions.

1. **Turn it off and stow it.** Turn your phone off or switch it to silent mode before you get in the car. Then stow it away so that it's out of reach.
2. **Spread the word.** Record a message on your phone that tells callers you're driving and will get back to them when you're off the road, or sign up for a service that offers this feature.
3. **Pull over.** If you need to make a call, pull over to a safe area first.
4. **Use your passengers.** Ask a passenger to make the call or respond to a text for you.
5. **X the Text.** Don't ever text and drive, surf the web or read your email while driving. It's dangerous and against the law in most state. Even voice-to-text isn't risk-free.<sup>3</sup>
6. **Know the law.** Familiarize yourself with state and local laws before you get in the car. Some states and localities prohibit the use of hand-held cell phones in addition to texting. GHSA offers a handy state law chart at <http://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/distracted%20driving>.
7. **Prepare.** If using a GPS device, enter your destination before you start to drive. If you prefer a map or written directions, review them in advance. If you need help while driving, ask a passenger to assist you or pull over to a safe location to change your GPS or review your map/directions.
8. **Secure your pets.** Unsecured pets can be a big distraction in the car.
9. **Mind the kids.** Pull over to a safe place to address situations involving children in the car.
10. **Focus on driving.** Multi-tasking behind the wheel is dangerous.<sup>4</sup> Refrain from eating, drinking, reading, grooming, smoking, and any other activity that takes your mind and eyes off the road.

<sup>1</sup> Traffic Safety Facts. Research note, Distracted Driving 2011. (April 2013). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Washington, DC.

<sup>2</sup> Strayer, D.L., Cooper, J.M., Turrill, J., Coleman, J. Medeiros-Ward, N., Biondi, F. (June 2013). Measuring Cognitive Distraction in the Automobile, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> National Safety Council (2013). The Great Multi-tasking Lie [Infographic]. [http://www.nsc.org/safety\\_road/Distracted\\_Driving/Pages/The-Great-Multitasking-Lie.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/The-Great-Multitasking-Lie.aspx)