

Distracted Drivers...BE ALERT

Ken White
ALR DOC Safety Officer
December 1, 2016

So it's getting cold...some say too cold to ride. Unless, of course you are in Southern California. While some of us are putting up their bikes for the winter, others are still riding and are able to all year. Now is the time to be extra vigilant...distracted drivers and night-time driving are two big dangers facing motorcyclist in the winter months.

When we talk about distracted driving, what is the first thing to come to mind...of course, everyone wants to say CELL PHONE USE. While this may be the #1 reason these days for distracted drivers, there are many other reasons to be concerned.

When I found the following article, I had to share it, because it supports Distracted Driving Safety Training. The source of this information is: [Top 5 Causes of Distracted Driving](#) (Although there are 6 listed here).

According to a 2009 report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one out of every five car crashes causing an injury involved some element of distracted driving, and 16% of all fatal automobile accidents also involved distracted driving. (Note: Apparently Distracted Driving has been on safety experts radar for quite some time.)

Statistics show that taking your eyes off the road for just two seconds can double your risk of a crash. Unfortunately, most drivers engaging in distracted behaviors are losing sight of the road long enough to quadruple their risk of an accident. For example, a report commissioned by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration found that sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, the equivalent of blindly driving an entire football field at 55 miles per hour.

Despite the well documented dangers of distracted driving, it continues to pose a serious problem. However, as a recent article from Our Kids <[Our Kids - Top 5 Driver Distractions And Driving Safety](#)> points out, it's not just cell phones that are causing problems on our roadways. Here are the top 5 causes of driver distractions:

1) Cell Phones

It's no surprise that cell phones are the leading cause of distracted driving. (Note: Some studies refute this claim. They say that inattention/day dreaming is the leading cause.) A study conducted by the University of Utah found that using a cell phone while driving (even if it's hands free) creates the same delayed reactions as a person with a blood alcohol level of .08 percent (the legal limit).

2) Car Stereos

Although adjusting the radio is a common task while driving, having preset stations and exercising common sense can help eliminate this distraction. As Csaba Csere, editor of Car and Driver magazine explains: <[SamrtMotorist: Distracted Drives Cause Motor Vehicle Accidents](#)> , "...the most important safety factor is a competent driver paying attention to the task behind the wheel...Don't tune the radio when you're negotiating traffic in a complicated intersection."

3) Passengers

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Whether it's turning around to talk to your kids or looking at the person sitting in your passenger seat, the NHTSA estimates that talking to passengers was the leading distraction in 7,000 crashes last year <<http://mailtrack.me/tracking/raWzMz50paMkCGZIZQV2BGL5BGDzMKWjqzA2pzSaqR9ZwpkAmN2ZQDIWay2LKu2pG0kZQD0Awp1AwtmBlx>> . Although the department's research stated that passengers typically pose only a "cognitive" distraction, it's still one of the most common causes of distracted driving.

4) GPS Devices

Even with the helpful intention of navigating drivers to their destination, GPS devices can present a major distraction. Some studies suggest that any sort of distraction is just as dangerous as using your cell phone <[USA Today - Car Navigation, Radio Touch-Screens can Distract Drivers](#)> , and because GPS devices require the same type of visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver as sending a text message, they're potentially just as dangerous.

5) Eating or Drinking

A UK insurance provider commissioned a study confirming that when it comes to reducing a driver's reactions, snacking while driving is on par with using a cell phone <[Insurance Step - Snacking While Driving](#)> . The report determined that, "the mental workload required to eat, drink and drive at the same time was significantly raised, indicating that drivers who consume enroute have a greatly reduced ability to deal with other events."

Despite being the most frequent, these five causes aren't the only instances of distracted driving. Other common examples include smoking, grooming, dropping something, or even reading a newspaper or book. Regardless of the activity, keeping attention focused on the task at hand and eliminating unnecessary distractions can have a major impact on a driver's overall safety.

In the Distracted Driving training module, we learned about a 6th major cause:

6) Day Dreaming, or simply Not Paying Attention to Driving

According to one source, INATTENTION / DAY DREAMING is the cause of more vehicle incidents than any other cause!

After reading and studying the causes and effects of distracted driving for almost three years, I've found that many safety experts agree that "keeping attention focused on the task at hand and eliminating unnecessary distractions can have a major impact on a driver's overall safety."