

A photograph of a man in a car, seen from the side, looking down at a smartphone in his hand. The background is blurred, showing the interior of the car and a road ahead. The overall color palette is warm, with oranges and yellows.

**SMART  
STEPS**

TO LIVE LONGER

# DISTRACTED DRIVING:

*YOU KNOW YOU DO IT, BUT DO YOU KNOW THE RISK?*

**BE  
INJURY  
FREE**

## INTRODUCTION

We all find ourselves pressed for time, short of sleep, fitting in too many work or personal demands, feeling stressed, and wishing we had more hours in the day. As a result, we try to catch up with time by racing from place to place and multi-tasking in our vehicles. We take for granted our responsibility to operate what is a powerful and potentially deadly machine. We have all been personally affected by distracted driving, know someone who has, or we have had close calls that should remind us to stay focused on the road. However, we let ourselves lose focus because we falsely believe that our actions are not a problem, and that it's other drivers who are unsafe. The facts about distracted driving are shocking, but the most important fact you need to know is that the way YOU drive directly affects your safety, as well as the safety of others on the road.

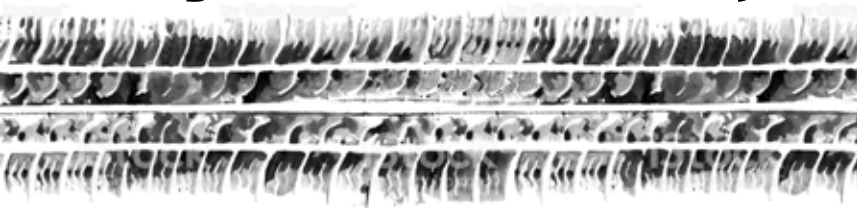
Driver distraction plays a role in about 4 million motor vehicle crashes in North America each year. In Ontario, distracted driving accounts for more deaths than impaired or speed-related crashes. In particular, the use of electronic and handheld devices while driving is a growing problem. Drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely, and drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be in a collision compared to drivers who are focused on the road.

There are many reasons why you should pay more attention on the road. Aside from causing preventable collisions, senseless injuries, and deaths; it is against the law. Read this guide to understand your risk and learn how you can help fix this costly and deadly problem.

# WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Distracted driving includes the use of cell phones, radios, music players, DVD players, and other electronics such as GPS devices or e-readers while behind the wheel. Specifically, operating a device, or even holding a device counts as distracted driving. It also includes distractions from a child, other passengers, or other activities such as eating, drinking, reading, or personal grooming. It is anything that takes your eyes and focus off the road, and puts you at risk of losing control of your vehicle.

**In just one second,**



**DRIVING AT 50 KM/H,  
YOUR CAR TRAVELS 45 FEET.**

Therefore, even taking your eyes off the road for one second can have serious consequences.

# HOW DISTRACTED ARE YOU?

NEARLY **3/4**

OF CANADIAN DRIVERS

ADMIT TO DRIVING DISTRACTED

Pay attention to your distracted behaviour on your next drive. When you reach your destination, use the chart to the right to assess your distracted driving risk:

# WHY IS DISTRACTED DRIVING A CONCERN?

**You Can Hurt or Even Kill Someone.** Distracted driving rates are surpassing impaired driving rates and are now the number one road safety concern among Canadians. In Ontario, deaths from collisions caused by distracted driving doubled between 2000-2013. In 2013, one person was injured every 30 minutes in a collision involving distracted driving.

**It is Against the Law and Has Serious Consequences.** Law enforcement in Canada continues to crack down on distracted driving. All provinces in Canada, plus the Yukon and Northwest Territories have bans on using cellphones or hand-held electronic devices while driving or when stopped at a red light. Alberta's laws

go further to include distractions such as eating, drinking, reading, writing, and personal grooming.

In each province, penalties include hefty fines and demerit points, which could lead to license suspension. Fines have increased over the last few years and range from \$80-\$1,000. If convicted, the penalty you face depends on the kind of license you hold, and how many years you've been driving. However, you can legally use a hands-free device (e.g., Bluetooth) but only to turn it on and off, and it must be mounted securely in place while driving.

If you endanger someone due to any type of driver distraction, you may be charged with careless driving under provincial Highway Traffic Acts. This charge carries heavier fines, demerit points, and license suspension (e.g. in Ontario, six demerit points, fines up to \$2,000, jail terms of six months, and a license suspension of up to two years). According to a national survey, 80% of Canadians

While driving today, did I do any of the following?	Approximate number of times
<input type="checkbox"/> Change the radio station/switch my media	
<input type="checkbox"/> Program a destination in my phone or GPS	
<input type="checkbox"/> Look at my phone or hold my phone	
<input type="checkbox"/> Answer a phone call	
<input type="checkbox"/> Read or write a text message on my phone	
<input type="checkbox"/> Eat or drink something	
<input type="checkbox"/> Read something in print or on my phone	
<input type="checkbox"/> Groom myself or look in the mirror	
<input type="checkbox"/> Look at or talk to a passenger	
<input type="checkbox"/> Interact with a child in the back seat	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feel fatigued	
<input type="checkbox"/> Rush to my destination	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other distraction	+ _____

Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 45' = \_\_\_\_\_

If each distraction stole your focus for only 1 second, driving at 50 km/h, you drove        (FROM ABOVE) feet with your eyes off the road during your trip.

believe texting while driving should be a criminal offence; however, it is already a criminal offence to cause bodily harm or death due to distracted driving, in which case you could be charged with dangerous driving. Dangerous driving carries even higher penalties, including jail terms of up to 14 years for causing death.

**Distracted Driving is as Bad as Driving Impaired with Alcohol or Drugs.** Socially, and in the eyes of law enforcement, driving while distracted is seen as the same as driving impaired by alcohol or drugs. In Canada, it is a criminal offence to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of over 0.08, or 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood in your system. If you talk on a cellphone while driving, you may be driving just as dangerously as someone who is driving with a BAC of 0.08.

## HOW CAN I HELP FIX THE PROBLEM?

If every driver focused on the road and eliminated distractions while driving, we could prevent the majority of collisions. This is because 80% of collisions and 65% of near crashes have some form of driver inattention as a contributing factor. These statistics are likely even higher in reality because these incidents are largely underreported.

### FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO BE A SAFER DRIVER:

- **Stay present while driving.** Commuting can become second nature and we often go into autopilot mode. Stay focused at all times.
- **Give yourself extra time.** Schedule your time properly to avoid rushing and multi-tasking in the car.
- **Pre-plan your trip.** Prepare yourself before you leave the driveway by pre-setting your electronics (e.g., GPS destination, music selection).
- **Use technology to your advantage.** Use Bluetooth or hands-free capabilities, or set your phone to send automatic replies for people trying to call or text you.
- **Ask for help.** Have a passenger take a call or respond to texts for you.
- **Pull over.** If you must make that important call and there is no other option, or you are driving with kids that need attention, carefully pull over to a safe area.
- **Remove the temptation to check your phone altogether.** Silence notifications, turn off your phone, or place it out of sight in the glove compartment or back seat.

**REMEMBER:** Nothing is so important that it cannot wait. It is not worth the risk!

# HOW CAN YOU REDUCE YOUR RISK OF DISTRACTED DRIVING?

## CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- Stay present while driving
- Give myself extra time
- Pre-plan my trip (set GPS or select music)
- Silence notifications on my phone
- Use Bluetooth technology to make calls
- Put my phone out of sight and/or reach
- Ask a passenger for help
- Pull over safely

## What are **YOUR** reasons to focus on the road?

**Instructions:** Fill this card with the names of loved ones, things that are important to you, or goals you want to achieve in your life. Cut out and clip it on your visor. Read it each time you get in your car, before you start your engine, to remind yourself to drive safely.



### MY REASONS FOR DRIVING SAFELY

My loved ones: \_\_\_\_\_

My travel plans: \_\_\_\_\_

My life: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Key References:

Ontario Ministry of Transportation. (2016). *Distracted driving*. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/distracted-driving>.

CAA. (n.d.). *Distracted driving: Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://distracteddriving.caa.ca/education/>

Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC). (2016). *Distracted driving*. Retrieved from <http://www.ibc.ca/qc/auto/risk-management/distracted-driving>

MAKE IT HAPPEN

# AT YOUR WORKPLACE

- **Educate and Raise Awareness** – Teach employees about safely commuting to work while traveling by car for work purposes (e.g., host webinars or safety training).
- **Support Good Time Management** – Build employee capacity to manage their time for doing work tasks, and taking allotted breaks and lunches so that they are not tempted to do work or personal tasks while driving.
- **Create a Supportive Environment** – Avoid placing unrealistic deadlines on employees which may cause them to multi-task while driving – do not encourage employees to create an “office in the car.”
- **Develop Supportive Health and Safety Policies** – Amend or develop policies at your workplace to limit the use of cell phones for work-related calls and emails while driving. Create a policy that restricts an employee from calling or texting another employee when they know he or she is on the road.

We are all part of a community of drivers on the road, connected by roads that lead us to our places of work, social gatherings, or home to our loved ones. Let's help each other get to our destinations safely. Every time you drive, make driving your only focus. Pay attention to how many times you are distracted. Ask yourself, “Is the activity necessary? Is it worth the risk of harming myself or others?” Keep your eyes on the road and your mind on driving. Imagine that every time you drive, you are driving next to your friend, colleague, or loved one, and exercise the same amount of care. Help make the roads safer for yourself and others.

## WEBSITES:

Distracted driving statistics and legislation by province:  
[www.ibc.ca/qc/auto/risk-management/distracted-driving](http://www.ibc.ca/qc/auto/risk-management/distracted-driving)

Share your commitment to #putdownthephone.  
Encourage others to focus on the road:  
[www.ontario.ca/page/distracted-driving](http://www.ontario.ca/page/distracted-driving)

Insurance Bureau of Canada brochure – DWD May Soon Be the New DUI  
<http://assets.ibc.ca/Documents/Brochures/DWD-May-Soon-Be-the-New-DUI.pdf>

