

June 2017

Risk Management

Distracted Driving Is Not Safe Driving



According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014 Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, approximately 13 people per day die while on duty. Implementing safety measures can change these statistics. Motor vehicle crashes are among the top two causes of death throughout a person's lifetime. The leading cause of work related deaths are vehicle accidents. The majority of these deaths are caused by distracted drivers. It is speculated cell phones are the most common cause of these distractions, but it is impossible to know the true scope. However, more than 85 percent of the estimated 100 million cell phone users talk on their phone regularly while driving. This is according to a survey conducted by Prevention magazine. Currently, there is no reliable method to accurately determine how many accidents involve cell phone use. Police must often rely on drivers to admit to cell phone use during a traffic accident investigation.

The National Safety Council (N.S.C.) reported 53 percent of people believe using hands-free devices while driving is safer. Newer vehicles come equipped with "infotainment" dashboards and hands-free technology so they must be safer, right? Actually no. These hands-free devices are not safer and occupy your brain just as much as handheld cell phones. Hands-free devices are for convenience only, not safety.

Driving and cell phone conversations both require a great deal of thought. When cell phone use is paired with driving, your brain is unable to do either well. Try reading a book while having a phone conversation. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the N.S.C., drivers talking on cell phones (to include hands-free devices) can miss up to 50 percent of their driving environments. This includes pedestrians and red lights.

Even cell phone use at a stop light is unsafe. A recent AAA Auto Insurance study shows, people are distracted up to 27 seconds after they have sent a voice text. Sending a voice text must be safer right? Wrong! It is actually very distracting because you are not only mentally distracted, but also visually distracted due to autocorrect errors.

In today's culture, our drive for increased productivity makes it tempting to use cellphones while driving. People often think they are multitasking and effectively accomplishing two things at the same time. Some people may think that you are a great multitasker and might often drive and talk on the phone, reach their destination safely, and believe they have accomplished both effectively. Here is the reality:

1. People actually did not "multitask".
2. People did not accomplish both tasks with optimal focus and effectiveness.

In reference to a study conducted by the N.S.C., human brains do not perform two tasks at the same time. Instead, the brain handles tasks sequentially by switching from one task to another. These tasks can be mentally switched rapidly which can lead a person to think they are performing more than one task at the same time effectively. In reality, the brain is switching attention between task and performing one task at a time.

While driving any vehicle, your undivided attention to the road and your surroundings is key to getting you and your passengers to your destination safely.