

### Before you begin

Think about ways you and your fellow employees can be distracted while driving. Review your company policy regarding distracted driving. Study local laws and regulations regarding distracted driving. Read articles and resources on distracted driving. Review your company policy on distracted driving, and update it to reflect the values of your organization regarding driving safety. Use this talk to educate your employees on the importance of good driving habits, inform your employees of your policy, and discuss methods to help employees eliminate distractions and become better drivers.



### Introduction

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving causes nearly 10% of all roadway crashes, and almost 10% of all fatalities in vehicle crashes. Approximately nine people are killed each day in the U.S. from a motor vehicle accident caused by distracted driving. The good news is that we can reduce driver distractions through awareness and developing good driving habits.

Through group discussion, your employees will raise each other's awareness of driving distractions. They will do this by incorporating hazard identification to the workplace, whether in a formal fleet or the forgotten fleet (i.e., the salesperson or delivery driver who drives a company-compensated vehicle). Through peer-to-peer feedback and employee suggestions, the discussion leader will offer feedback of employee suggestions to upper management where appropriate.

## Definitions

Distracted driving is a diversion of the driver's attention while driving. When a driver participates in any non-driving activity, this has the potential to distract them from the primary task of driving. Distracted driving occurs in three ways.

1. Visual distraction, which involves the driver taking their eyes off the road.
2. Manual distraction, which involves the driver taking their hands off the wheel.
3. Cognitive distraction is a distraction where the driver is not thinking about the driving task, which would include daydreaming or dealing with strong emotions.

## Discussion

Below are the three distracted driving categories. Ask each person to provide one (or more) examples of a distraction in each category. Then have the person offer a suggestion for how to minimize that distraction. (Write suggestions on a flipchart.)

### **Category 1: Visual distractions — eyes off the road**

Internal visual distractions, such as:

- Looking at cell phone/electronic devices.
- Reading maps, notes, newspaper.
- Applying make-up or shaving.
- Changing the radio station or app.
- Programming GPS.
- Other occupants in the vehicle.

External visual distractions, such as:

- Snow or ice on windows or windshield.
- Sun glare.
- Billboards and signs.
- Pedestrians.
- Animals.
- Accidents ("rubber necking").
- Looking for an address, a business, etc.

### **Category 2: Manual distractions — hands off the wheel**

Examples of manual distractions, include:

- Programming a GPS.
- Talking or selecting numbers on the phone.
- Texting/emailing.
- Adjusting climate controls, radio, seat, mirrors, steering wheel, safety belt, donning-doffing clothing.
- Reaching for cargo/objects.
- Smoking.
- Consuming food or drink.

### **Category 3: Cognitive distractions — mind not on task**

Examples of cognitive distractions, include:

- Inattention/daydreaming.
- Fatigue/drowsiness.
- Stress from work, home, family, finances, etc.
- Emotional conditions (anger, anxiety, grief).

### **Additional discussion points**

Make sure employees understand the potential personal costs of distracted driving, including injuries, disabilities, and loss of life to themselves and others.

Review the company policy regarding distracted driving, as well as the consequences, ranging from discipline or retraining to loss of job.

Make sure employees who drive understand “hands free” laws and regulations.

### **Conclusion**

Distracted driving causes motor vehicle accidents resulting in unacceptable human and financial costs. Raising awareness of those habits that result in visual, manual, or cognitive distraction can motivate change.

Use the employee suggestions from this safety talk to make changes to your company policy. Make a list of the habits and employee suggestions to be used as periodic reminders during your monthly safety talks.

### **Group activity – true or false**

1. Distracted driving contributes to traffic crashes.
2. Distracted driving is a problem on the job.
3. Distracted driving is a choice.
4. Distracted driving is more than mobile phone usage.
5. There are many things that drivers can do to minimize the potential for distracted driving.

### **Resources**

NIOSH: Motor Vehicle Safety at Work

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/motorvehicle/topics/distracteddriving/default.html>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: Distracted Driving

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>

National Safety Council: Distracted Driving for Employers

<https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/distracted-driving/employers>

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety: Distracted Driving

<https://www.iihs.org/topics/distracted-driving>