

Avoid Phone Conversations and Texting Behind the Wheel

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, driver distractions are a contributing cause in approximately 25 percent of all motor vehicle crashes or about 1.2 million accidents. However, distractions can be hard to quantify, and the number of accidents due to driver distractions is difficult to define. What can further complicate matters is that there may be more than one distraction, such as texting while chastising a child in the backseat.

Cell phones are considered one of the leading driver distractions. As a result, more communities are placing restrictions on drivers' use of cell phones. And more states are now passing laws banning the practice of texting while driving. The U.S. Congress is even considering a federal law related to this ban. The following tips are offered to motorists in regards to cell phone use in vehicles.

You should never text message while driving. One study indicates that when drivers engage in texting, their collision risk was 23 times greater than when not texting. Another study found that texting while driving is more dangerous than drunken driving.

You should wait until the car trip is complete before placing a call. Your cell phone's voice mail feature should answer a call while you are driving.

Absolutely essential calls should only be performed while stopped. However, it is not wise to pull over on the side of the road, where a rear-end collision is possible. Instead, you should pull into a parking lot to perform this task.

The phone should be placed where it is easy to see and reach.

You should take advantage of speed dialing capabilities.

You should never drive and talk on the cell phone during stressful, emotional, or complex discussions since the risk of an accident is heightened.

If you must occasionally use a cell phone while driving, you should consider using a hands-free cellular phone since some studies indicated that these are safer to use.

