

Distracted driving IMPACTS us all

The leading cause of workplace deaths in Ontario is motor-vehicle incidents.



Distracted driving means someone is driving while they're doing something that takes their attention away from their driving. In Ontario, the OPP have reported that, on average, there is a distracted driving collision every 30 minutes.

These are some examples of everyday distractions—being tired, programming a navigation system, looking for something on the seat or the floor, and adjusting the radio.

One of the most common distractions—and the riskiest—is using a phone when you're behind the wheel. All of these distractions are a serious danger, not only to the driver but also to the passengers and other motorists.

Are you distracted?

We have all seen distracted drivers on the road, but have you ever asked yourself if you are one of them? If you do any of the things listed below when you're driving, you could be a distracted driver:

- Talking on your phone, whether it's hands-free or hand-held.
- Keeping your phone within easy reach.
- Eating, drinking, combing your hair, shaving, putting on makeup, or getting dressed.
- Thinking about the events of the day rather than the road.
- Paying more attention to your passengers than to the road ahead of you.

Tips for avoiding distractions

The most important way to avoid distractions is to realize that your attention needs to be on the road. If you remember that, it's easier to take steps to resist the distractions of modern life while you're driving.

Before driving

1. **Do a pre-trip inspection**—Check your vehicle before you get in. That will help you spot a problem before it's too late.
2. **Map it out**—Before travelling, map out your route first. Put your travel information into your GPS while you're still parked.
3. **Be comfortable**—Before putting the car in gear, make sure you're comfortable by adjusting the seat, the heating or air conditioning, the mirrors, and the steering wheel. Also set up your music before you start to drive.
4. **Keep it clean**—Things like pop cans, wrappers, coffee cups, or sports equipment can all distract you by moving or rolling around on the floor. By cleaning your car, you can limit this distraction.
5. **Eat, drink, and do your grooming at home**—Give yourself the time to do those things before you get into your vehicle. Your only job should be to drive safely.
6. **Set up your phone**—Some apps or settings can block incoming calls and texts while driving, or send automatic replies to people trying to call or text you. Before you get in your vehicle, record an outgoing message that tells callers you're driving and you'll get back to them when you're done.



While Driving

- 1. Use hands-free devices**—In Ontario, it's against the law to use hand-held devices while you're driving. Although hands-free devices are permitted, it's safer not to make or answer any phone calls when you're behind the wheel.
- 2. Turn off your phone or switch it to silent mode**—You can even put it in the glove compartment (lock it, if you have to) or in a bag on the back seat.
- 3. Stay relaxed and alert**—If you're worried or tired, you can't react as quickly.
- 4. Use your phone only when it is safe to do so**—If you have to make a call or send a text or email, pull off the road carefully and come to a complete stop in a safe place. You can also ask a passenger to take a call or send a text for you.
- 5. Don't answer e-mails or text messages**—Each time you read a text or an email, you're taking your eyes off of the road for at least four seconds. Studies have shown that drivers who take their eyes off the road for more than two seconds are twice as likely to have a crash.

If you follow those safety tips regularly, you'll be better able to notice something that may be dangerous before you set out, you'll have fewer distractions when you're behind the wheel, and you'll give more attention to the task of driving.

How IHSA can help

Driving safely takes your full attention. To help drivers get rid of distractions when they're driving, IHSA has created several resources. They include free safety tip sheets, a poster, and a new e-learning option for IHSA's *Distracted Driving* course.

The new *Distracted Driving* e-learning program is designed to help the participants do the following:

- Recognize driving distractions.
- Identify the risks of distracted driving.
- Learn what the penalties are for distracted driving.
- Learn strategies for preventing and avoiding distracted driving.

IHSA has several other in-class and in-cab courses that cover a range of safe driving techniques.

- Distracted Driving (classroom-based and e-learning version)
- Defensive Driving—Commercial
- Defensive Driving—G Class Driver
- Highway Traffic Act
- Hours of Service Seminar
- Preventing Work-Related Motor Vehicle Collisions (e-learning version available)
- School Bus Driver Improvement Course
- CVOR Facility Audit Overview Seminar
- In-Cab Coaching and Evaluation

To get your free resources and find out how IHSA can help you be safer on Ontario roads, please visit ihsa.ca/distracted-driving