

# Distracted driving

## Explain dangers

Distracted driving means that someone is doing something that takes their attention away from the road while they're driving. This could include:

- Talking on their phone or even keeping it within easy reach
- Adjusting the radio or programming a GPS
- Eating, drinking, combing their hair, shaving, putting on makeup, or getting dressed
- Looking or reaching for something on the passenger seat, back seat, or floor
- Thinking more about the events of the day than their driving
- Paying more attention to their passengers than to the road ahead of them.

Distractions are a serious danger, not only to the driver but also to passengers and other motorists. The OPP reports that a person is injured in a distracted driving collision every 30 minutes. It is the cause of more fatal collisions than speeding or impaired driving.

In Ontario, tougher penalties on distracted driving came into effect on Jan 1, 2019. For a first offense, drivers may be fined up to \$1,000, lose their licence for three days, and receive three demerit points. Convicted motorists may also see their insurance rates go up.

## Identify controls

### 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 heat/air conditioning, the mirrors, and the steering wheel.
4. **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.

5. **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.

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. Or pair your car audio system with your phone using Bluetooth®.

7. **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 so you're not tempted.

### WHILE DRIVING

1. **Use a hands-free or mounted device**—In Ontario, it's against the law to hold an electronic device in your hand while you're driving. Although hands-free and mounted devices are permitted, they're still a distraction. It's safer not to make or answer any phone calls when behind the wheel.
2. **Stay relaxed and alert**—If you're worried or tired, you can't react as quickly.
3. **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. Or ask your passenger to take a call or send a text for you.
4. **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.

## Demonstrate

Show your workers how to set up their phones to send automatic replies or block calls and texts while driving.

Review your company's distracted driving health and safety policy with your crew. Remind them that their attention must be on the task of driving.