



JBM-HH Safety Gram

Sustaining, Supporting, and Defending Safety Excellence



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Driven To Distraction

When you drive a motor vehicle, you should give this task 100 percent of your attention. It is amazing how many drivers don't. They find other activities to keep them entertained and challenged as they try to pilot a ton of steel down a busy highway. Sometimes the result is tragic. Serious traffic accidents have occurred because the drivers were momentarily distracted and took their attention off their driving.



Here are some typical distractions behind the wheel. Do any of them sound familiar?

- ◆ Trying to find a radio station or selections on your tape player.
- ◆ Fishing around in the glove compartment for something.
- ◆ Combing your hair, checking makeup in a mirror or even shaving.
- ◆ Drinking coffee, trying not to spill coffee, cleaning up spilled coffee.
- ◆ Trying to hold a hamburger together while you eat it and keep the ketchup off your shirt.
- ◆ Lighting a cigarette, fumbling for the dropped lighter or ember.
- ◆ Reading a map.
- ◆ Looking for an address.
- ◆ Dialing a cellular phone or engaging in an in depth conversation with someone in the vehicle.
- ◆ Disciplining restless children in the car, or feeding them snacks.
- ◆ Dodging a bee in the vehicle.
- ◆ Staring in amazement at other drivers doing these things.

Here are some reminders for driving safely without distractions:

Certainly people today are rushed, and many have become accomplished at doing other things while driving. However, driving and trying to do other tasks decreases the safety of the driver and passengers, because you do not have as much control of the vehicle and you cannot drive defensively – anticipating other drivers' actions.

- ◆ Make sure you, and the workers you supervise, use cell phones safely. The safest thing is to make your calls before you set out. If you receive a cell phone call while you are driving, let the caller leave a message, pull over, and call that person back. Reinforce this safety policy by issuing regular reminders and by setting a good example.
- ◆ Consider how your children might be observing your unsafe habits and thinking of them as something normal that everyone does. If you don't want your children jabbering away on cell phones while they are driving, don't let them see you doing it, ever.
- ◆ Be aware that using a hands-free, voice-activated cell phone can still distract you.
- ◆ A safe driver also stops before checking maps and addresses, looking at paperwork, and dealing with similar distractions.
- ◆ Even eating, drinking, fiddling with the radio or vehicle sound system, adjusting heaters and digging items out of the glove box while driving have caused vehicle crashes.

- ◆ Arguments or stressful conversations with passengers can also divert the driver's attention from the road. We know better than to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, but fatigue, stress and strong emotions such as anger can also impair the ability to drive safely.

So, think twice about driver distractions. If you have to do something that requires your attention, then pull over. Safe driving takes all of your concentration!

