



MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: Driver Distractions

Maine Crash Facts:

To some, being inattentive or distracted when driving may not seem like a big deal, but here is some information on what happens when drivers don't pay attention:

- 14,000 crashes each year are due to Driver Inattention or Distraction. That's 40 times every day that someone in Maine has a crash due to distractions.
- Driver Distraction or Inattention causes nearly 70 deaths and 7,000 injuries each year.
- At 50 miles per hour, your vehicle will travel 150 feet in just two seconds (less time than it takes to find a CD or look at the map). Can you afford to miss that much of what's happening on the road?
- About 40% of Maine's crashes are caused by driver distraction or inattention.

From 2002 through 2004 driver inattention and distraction lead to these types of crashes:

- Over 8,100 run off road crashes resulting in 63 deaths and 4,500 injuries.
- Almost 8,500 intersection crashes resulting in 35 deaths and over 4,200 injuries.
- 1,200 Head on crashes resulting in 47 fatalities and 900 injuries.
- Over 21,000 rear end crashes that resulted in 22 fatalities and over 9,800 injuries.
- Driving is a full time mental and physical task.

Which of the following activities do you do while you're driving?

- Change a CD or a radio station
- Eat or drink
- Make a phone call
- Reach for something in the back seat
- Reach for *(and maybe even read)* a map
- Turn to talk to the passengers (even backseat!)
- Fix your hair, shave, put on make-up or other personal grooming
- Focus your mind on something other than driving



Comments:

- *Every one of these activities distracts you from your driving and puts you at risk of a crash.*
- *Consider how long it takes for another car to leave a driveway; for a moose to step into the roadway; for a child to dart into the street? If you are distracted at that same moment, even for just a second, the results can be tragic.*

Most trips are uneventful, with few or no road problems. But unexpected events do happen and if you're distracted at that moment, things may never be the same for you and others involved. It happens 14,000 times a year -or 40 times a day - on Maine roads.

Flash Facts focuses on the dangers of Driver Distraction and Inattention.

Remember, conditions on the road are constantly changing.

Keep your attention sharp, by constantly scanning different perspectives (watching the road ahead, checking the roadsides for animals and other activity and driveways for possible vehicles, check your mirrors...).

Driving distractions sometimes occur when using conveniences that many take for granted as part of the driving experience...BUT if they take away from your attention to the road, they can be dangerous.

Think about what it takes to just put a CD into the player in your vehicle.
(How long was your attention fixed on finding the CD, opening the case and removing it and putting it into the player, and not your driving?)

Wait to change the CD when you reach a red light.

Think about all the steps involved in making a cell phone call, and remember that using the phone takes not only physical attention but a demand on your mental attention as well.

Make cell phone calls when the vehicle is stopped and you're safely off the road, or have your passenger place the call.

Reminder: Conditions on the road are constantly changing - continuously scan the road and roadside.

Other Reminders:

Distractions can be Visual (not watching what's on the road) and Mental (thinking about things other than your driving). Both are very dangerous and can cause you to miss what's happening on the road until it's too late.

- Avoid activities that take your mind and eyes off the road

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- The car is not the place to make up time by tending to non-driving activities. “Just Drive”...Leave multi-tasking to times of the day when you’re not driving
 - Watch for others who may not be paying attention
 - Drive at a reasonable speed
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Think about how much attention is focused on a phone call when you are just at home or at work. You miss much on the activity going on around you when you’re deep into a conversation. The good news about phone distractions at home is you are not traveling at 55 miles per hour.

Phone calls have the same demand on your attention when you’re on the road. Your priority when driving is to smoothly navigate and be ready to instantly respond to sudden changes and road emergencies.

Be a Road Model: The cell phone convenience of making a call no matter where you are is terrific...but use it safely.

- If you have to make a call, stop the car at a safe off-road location, or
- Have your passengers make the phone call for you.

Other Reminders:

- Be aware that road and traffic conditions are constantly changing. (especially this time of year, pavement can turn slippery very quickly.)
- Keep your eyes and mind continually on the road.
- If something is going to take your attention away from driving, pull safely off the road first (not just onto the shoulder)
- Keep music volumes at a safe level. Loud music blocks out warning sounds (sirens, screeching brakes, horns). Keep your ears open to outside sounds.

You can prevent a crash. Before you do something that takes attention away from driving, ask yourself: “How important is that... phone call; picking up the dropped baby toy; or struggling with the CD case?” Is it worth risking a crash that can injure or kill you, your passengers, or someone else? Remember, inattention causes 40 crashes every day and 70 deaths each year in Maine. Don’t let inattention make you a statistic.

Be A Road Model - When Driving, Be Attentive-Just Drive! And always wear your seat belt”