

## Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is one of the main causes of motor vehicle accidents in Canada each year. It can lead to vehicle and property damage or worse – injuries or fatalities. To minimize or eliminate distracted driving hazards, employers should be aware and educate workers about the different types of driving distractions. Communication between employers and workers is important for ensuring steps are taken to minimize the hazard of distracted driving.

Checking a text for **5 seconds** means that at 90 km/h, you've travelled the length of a football field **blindfolded**.

## What does distracted driving look like?

There are many distractions both inside and outside of vehicles. Any diversion of attention away from the safe operation of the vehicle can contribute to inattentive driving and may include:

- dialing, talking or texting on a cellular telephone;
- eating;
- reading, including looking at a map;
- personal grooming (including applying makeup, brushing teeth, combing hair, etc.);
- adjusting climate or radio controls;
- moving objects in the vehicle (devices, food containers, insects, etc.);
- passengers in the vehicle;
- using CB radio or other communication devices; and
- in-vehicle GPS navigation systems.



## How can workers eliminate or minimize distractions?

- Do not consume alcohol, drugs, medications, or other substances that could affect your driving.
- Familiarize yourself with the route and directions prior to leaving.
- Pre-program your route and listen to the GPS voice commands, but avoid looking at it.
- When using a hands free device, pre-program commonly used numbers and use voice activation.
- Allow calls to go to voicemail. If you must make or take a call or text message, pull over and park at a safe location.
- Have a passenger answer or place a call.
- Set your radio station or music device prior to driving.
- Put any distracting objects in the trunk.
- Do not eat, drink, groom, or smoke while operating a vehicle.
- Avoid emotional or stressful conversations while driving.
- Keep focus on the road and maintain two hands on the wheel.

**It is illegal to hold or use a handheld wireless communication device that is capable of receiving or transmitting telephone communications, electronic data, and email or text messages while operating a motor vehicle on Prince Edward Island.**

Source: Section 291.1 Highway Traffic Act

## What can employers do to protect their workers and others?

The more knowledge workers have regarding driving distractions, the more likely they are to eliminate or minimize those hazards. Help workers travel safely by performing the following:

- Establish a policy that outlines the methods workers may safely use a cell phone while operating a vehicle for company business.
- Hold regular educational safety meetings for all workers who drive as part of their job.
- Ensure work schedules allow workers enough time to travel to locations and focus on driving and not work duties while operating a vehicle.
- Install hands-free technologies in company-owned vehicles and educate workers on how to connect to, and use, these devices safely.
- Instruct workers to have a voicemail message that indicates they are driving and cannot respond to calls, texts, or emails.
- Do a thorough investigation of every driving accident, regardless of whether it resulted in a worker injury.



**Driver distraction is a factor in about 4 million motor vehicle crashes in North America each year. (RCMP, 2014)**

