Tips for Managing Driver Distraction

Distracted drivers pose a deadly risk to everyone on the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that in 2011, the most recent year for which data is available, 3,331 people lost their lives and another 387,000 were injured in distraction-affected crashes.\(^1\) Drivers engage in a range of distracting activities from talking and texting on their phones, to eating, grooming and reading. Even the use of hands-free technologies isn’t without risk as dangerous mental distractions exist even when drivers keep their hands on the wheel and eyes on the road.\(^2\)

Here are 10 tips for managing some of the most common distractions.

1. **Turn it off and stow it.** Turn your phone off or switch it to silent mode before you get in the car. Then stow it away so that it’s out of reach.

2. **Spread the word.** Record a message on your phone that tells callers you’re driving and will get back to them when you’re off the road, or sign up for a service that offers this feature.

3. **Pull over.** If you need to make a call, pull over to a safe area first.

4. **Use your passengers.** Ask a passenger to make the call or respond to a text for you.

5. **X the Text.** Don’t ever text and drive, surf the web or read your email while driving. It’s dangerous and against the law in most state. Even voice-to-text isn’t risk-free.\(^3\)

6. **Know the law.** Familiarize yourself with state and local laws before you get in the car. Some states and localities prohibit the use of hand-held cell phones in addition to texting. GHSA offers a handy state law chart at [http://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/distracted%20driving](http://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/distracted%20driving).

7. **Prepare.** If using a GPS device, enter your destination before you start to drive. If you prefer a map or written directions, review them in advance. If you need help while driving, ask a passenger to assist you or pull over to a safe location to change your GPS or review your map/directions.

8. **Secure your pets.** Unsecured pets can be a big distraction in the car.

9. **Mind the kids.** Pull over to a safe place to address situations involving children in the car.

10. **Focus on driving.** Multi-tasking behind the wheel is dangerous.\(^4\) Refrain from eating, drinking, reading, grooming, smoking, and any other activity that takes your mind and eyes off the road.


\(^3\) Ibid