

## The Dangers of Distracted Driving

Ian Ross

What is the most common cause of distracted driving? How many car accidents are caused by distracted driving? What can you do to help prevent distracted driving?

“It can wait!” is the message of AT&T’s ad campaign against texting and driving, statistically the most common cause of distracted driving. According to the National Safety Council, it is estimated that 26% of all car crashes involve the use of cell phones (Attorneys at Law, 2020). In the United States, it is reported that every day nine people are killed, and more than 1,000 people are injured due to distracted driving (CDC Motor Vehicle Safety, 2019). Unfortunately, in the State of Idaho, a traffic accident occurs every 22 minutes, and someone is killed in a crash every 40 hours (The Advocates Law, 2019). Cell phone use is a common cause of distracted driving because it encompasses three types of distractions, and preventing distracted driving as a result of cell phones will require further laws limiting their use and a change in how we interact with our phones while driving.

Cell phone use creates distracted driving in three ways. First, cell phone use creates a visual distraction. Anytime a cell phone is used while driving, the driver takes their eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. In this amount of time, driving 55 MPH, a driver can travel the length of a football field without looking at the road (CDC Motor Safety). Second, cell phones create a manual distraction. Cell phone use such as talking on the phone or texting often requires people to take a hand off of the steering wheel. This is dangerous because it limits the driver’s ability to respond to what is happening on the road. Lastly, cell phone use creates a cognitive distraction. According to AAA, mental distractions from cell phone use can linger for as long as

27 seconds (The Zebra 2020). This means that when someone uses their cell phone at a stop light, their phone can still distract them even after it is put away.

Although the State of Idaho has laws banning texting and driving and other forms of distracted driving, they do not fully cover the three types of distractions caused by cell phones. As of today, the State of Idaho still allows handheld use and the use of cell phones while at a traffic stop (Trusted Choice 2020). If the State of Idaho wishes to reduce distracted driving, it needs to join the sixteen states that have banned cell phone use while driving (Governors Highway Safety Association). We will also need to implement social change. Young drivers should be taught to keep their phones out of arms reach and to not interact with their phones until they are out of the car.

All drivers need to realize that using cell phones while driving is dangerous to everyone in the car and on the road. We should advocate for change not just in legislation but also in our actions. No message is more valuable than a life. After all, "It can wait!"

## Works Cited

CDC Motor Vehicle Safety. (2019). Distracted Driving. Retrieved from

[https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted\\_driving/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/index.html)

Governors Highway Safety Association. Distracted Driving. Retrieved from

[https://www.ghsa.org/state-](https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/distracted-driving#:~:text=Currently%2C%2048%20states%2C%20D.C.%2C,txt%20messaging%20by%20novice%20drivers.)

[laws/issues/distracted%20driving#:~:text=Currently%2C%2048%20states%2C%20D.C.%2C,txt%20messaging%20by%20novice%20drivers.](https://www.ghsa.org/state-laws/issues/distracted-driving#:~:text=Currently%2C%2048%20states%2C%20D.C.%2C,txt%20messaging%20by%20novice%20drivers.)

The Advocates Law. (2019). Car Accident Lawyer. Retrieved from

<https://www.idahoadvocates.com/boise-car-accident-lawyer/>

Trusted Choice. A Guide to Idaho's Distracted Driving Laws. Retrieved from

<https://www.trustedchoice.com/distracted-driving/idaho-laws/>

The Zebra. (2020). Distracted Driving Statistics. Retrieved from

<https://www.thezebra.com/distracted-driving-statistics/>