



STATE SAFETY OFFICE
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
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SAFETY MESSAGE 20-04

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Dangers of Distracted Driving

April's safety message covers Distracted Driving. Distracted driving was the reported cause of death of 3,450 people in 2016. An estimated 391,000 drivers were injured in distracted driving crashes in 2017. In 2019 distracted driving was a reported factor in 8.5% of fatal vehicle crashes. Drivers in their 20's make up 27% of the distracted drivers in fatal crashes. Drivers engaging in visual-manual subtasks (such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting) associated with the use of hand-held phones and other portable devices are three times more likely to be involved in a vehicle crash than non-distracted drivers.

Army policy states in AR 385-10, Cha 11, Para. 4-E, " Vehicle operators on DOD installations and operators of Government owned vehicles, on or off the installation, will not use cellular phones or other hand-held electronic devices unless the vehicle is safely parked or they are using hands-free device. Government-supplied electronic equipment that may be used for text messaging or other hand-held uses is prohibited for use by DOD personnel while driving any vehicle, whether or not on official Government business. The only exception to this prohibition are emergency responders (such as military police, ambulance, fire emergency, EOD and HAZMAT responders) while in performance of their official duty."

Studies show that drivers who send or receive text messages focus their attention away from the road for an average 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, this is the equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded. Distracted driving is not limited to the use of hand-held devices. Distracted driving includes the following, eating or drinking, talking to passengers, grooming (applying make-up or shaving), reading, to include maps, using a navigation system, watching a video, adjusting a radio. Anything that takes the drivers full attention from the task of driving is considered distracted driving.

Leaders should emphasize the dangers of distracted driving while conducting any training when vehicles are being used and while Soldiers are off duty. The loss of any Soldier due to distracted driving is a tragedy that can easily be avoided.

The National Safety Council provides many tools to help combat distracted driving accidents. They have training materials, on-line courses, and even a webinar to promote

safe-driving practices. This information can be found on the NSC's website, at the link <https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/get-involved/distracted-driving-awareness-month>

For additional information on distracted driving visit, www.distraction.gov. It contains statistics, laws, research, media and many other resources on distracted driving.

Here are AAA's Top 10 Tips to Avoid Distractions While Driving

10. Fully focus on driving. Do not let anything divert your attention, actively scan the road, use your mirrors and watch out for pedestrians and cyclists.

9. Store loose gear, possessions and other distractions that could roll around in the car, so you do not feel tempted to reach for them on the floor or the seat.

8. Make adjustments before you get underway. Address vehicle systems like your GPS, seats, mirrors, climate controls and sound systems before hitting the road. Decide on your route and check traffic conditions ahead of time.

7. Finish dressing and personal grooming at home – before you get on the road.

6. Snack smart. If possible, eat meals or snacks before or after your trip, not while driving. On the road, avoid messy foods that can be difficult to manage.

5. Secure children and pets before getting underway. If they need your attention, pull off the road safely to care for them. Reaching into the backseat can cause you to lose control of the vehicle.

4. Put aside your electronic distractions. Don't use cell phones while driving – handheld or hands-free – except in absolute emergencies. Never use text messaging, email functions, video games or the internet with a wireless device, including those [built into the vehicle](#), while driving.

3. If you have passengers, enlist their help so you can focus safely on driving.

2. If another activity demands your attention, instead of trying to attempt it while driving, pull off the road and stop your vehicle in a safe place. To avoid temptation, power down or stow devices before heading out.

1. As a general rule, if you cannot devote your full attention to driving because of some other activity, it's a distraction. Take care of it before or after your trip, not while behind the wheel.

To find previously published Safety Messages go to our NYARNG Safety Website:

<http://dmna.ny.gov/safety/>

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