



STATE SAFETY OFFICE
HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
330 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD
LATHAM, NEW YORK 12110



SAFETY MESSAGE 21-04

April is Distracted Driving Awareness

Distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic on our roads. While drivers texting behind the wheel tops what seems like an endless list of distractions, other risky actions include talking – whether it be on the phone or to others in the car, setting your navigation, adjusting what you're listening to, drinking coffee, applying makeup, and more. By driving distracted, you're robbing yourself of seconds that you may need to avoid a close call or deadly crash. 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.

IN 2019, distracted driving killed 3,142 people – a 10% increase from 2018. Distracted driving was a reported factor in 8.5% of fatal motor vehicle crashes. More than 400,000 people are injured in accidents caused by distracted driving according to the CDC. Young drivers seem more prone to using their phones while driving, 42% of high school students in the United States admitted that they text or email while driving. According to NHTSA research from 2017, driver 16 to 24 years old have been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at much higher rates than older drivers have since 2007.

While many claim they never drive while distracted, others admit to engaging in many other behaviors while driving, including texting while driving.

- 52.5% of respondents reporting eating while driving, down 4.2% from last year's respondents. Other behaviors include:
- Texting (23.6%)
- Taking photos (11.7%)
- Applying makeup (6.5%)
- 3.4% admitted to drinking while driving!
- 36.4% of participants completely agree that using a mobile device hinders your ability to drive, yet 36% admit to engaging in activities with a cellphone while driving.
- Less than half of participants completely agree that texting and driving is just as dangerous as drinking and driving, despite numerous studies proving both activities limit your capacity for awareness and focus.
- Only 4.1% of participants' ages 25-34 claimed they felt a high degree of pressure to respond to text messages while driving. In total, 12.1% of respondents in that age group felt any pressure to answer a text at all.
- 17.9% of the age group 18-24 felt the most pressure to respond to a text while driving. Interestingly, it is also this age group that is most often in accidents.

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.”

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 your 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/>

New York Army National Guard Safety Office Points of Contact:

Safety and Occupational Health Manager:

Alicia Howard

alicia.l.howard.civ@mail.mil

(518) 786-6097

Occupational Health Nurse:

Valerie Schwalbach

valerie.a.schwalbach.civ@mail.mil

(518) 786-4329

Safety Specialist:

Matthew Williams

matthew.s.williams117.mil@mail.mil

(518) 786-6040

Safety Specialist:

Chuck Austin

charles.b.austin2.civ@mail.mil

(518) 786-6121

M-Day Safety Specialists:

MSG Jerry Peace

jerry.l.peace.mil@mail.mil

M-Day Safety Specialists:

CW3 David Morton

david.t.morton.civ@mail.mil

M-Day Safety Specialists:

SFC Adama Ilboudo

adama.ilboudo.mil@mail.mil