

Stay Focused, Stay Safe: The Dangers of Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is one of the leading causes of traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities. Despite increased awareness, many drivers still engage in risky behaviors behind the wheel. Whether it's texting, eating, or adjusting the GPS, even a few seconds of inattention can lead to devastating consequences.

The American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division (ATSPA) is committed to raising awareness and preventing distracted driving through education and advocacy. Let's break down the facts, dangers, and steps you can take to stay safe on the road.

What is Distracted Driving?

Distracted driving occurs when a driver's attention is taken away from the road. This can be categorized into three main types:

1. **Visual Distractions** – Taking your eyes off the road (e.g., reading a text, looking at a GPS, or checking a notification).
2. **Manual Distractions** – Taking your hands off the wheel (e.g., eating, reaching for something, or adjusting controls).
3. **Cognitive Distractions** – Taking your mind off driving (e.g., talking on the phone, daydreaming, or engaging in deep conversation with passengers).

The most dangerous form of distraction? **Texting while driving**. Sending or reading a text takes an average of **5 seconds**—which, at 55 mph, is like driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.

The Real Impact of Distracted Driving

- **Fatalities and Injuries** – In the U.S., distracted driving contributes to thousands of deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries every year.
- **Teen Drivers at Risk** – Young drivers are more likely to engage in distractions, with texting being a leading cause of teen-related crashes.
- **Financial Costs** – Beyond human lives, distracted driving results in billions of dollars in crash-related damages, medical expenses, and legal costs.

Distracted Driving in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has taken steps to combat distracted driving, including a **statewide texting ban**. However, distractions go beyond texting, and staying focused requires personal responsibility from every driver.

How You Can Prevent Distracted Driving

1. **Put Your Phone Away** – Silence notifications and keep your phone out of reach while driving.

2. **Set Up Before You Go** – Adjust your GPS, music, and climate controls before starting your trip.
3. **Use Hands-Free Options** – If you must take a call, use Bluetooth or a hands-free system—but remember, even hands-free conversations can be distracting.
4. **Avoid Eating and Drinking** – Spills and handling food can take your attention off the road.
5. **Be a Role Model** – Set a good example for young drivers by practicing distraction-free driving.
6. **Speak Up** – If you're a passenger and see the driver getting distracted, politely remind them to focus on the road.

April is **Distracted Driving Awareness Month**, a time to spread awareness and encourage safer driving habits. Whether it's taking the pledge to drive distraction-free or sharing this message with friends and family, every action helps create safer roads for all.

At ATSPA, we believe that one split-second decision can make all the difference. Let's work together to keep our roads safe and distraction-free.

Take Action Today!

- ✓ Share this message on social media using #JustDrive.
- ✓ Talk to young drivers about the risks of distracted driving.
- ✓ Commit to keeping your focus on the road—because every life matters.