Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is any form of activity that diverts a person's attention away from their primary task of driving, including texting, eating and drinking, grooming, talking on the phone or to passengers and listening to loud music. Distracted driving may lead to other dangerous behaviors including speeding, risk-taking and drowsy driving. Some reasons why drivers engage in distracted driving include stressful jobs, busy lifestyles and easy access to technology. The three main types of distraction are: Visual, manual and cognitive, but not all three have to occur for a driver to be dangerously distracted. Visual distractions take your eyes off the road, manual distractions take your hands off the wheel and cognitive distraction takes your mind off the road. Texting while driving is especially dangerous because it involves all three types of distraction at the same time. A distraction-affected crash or collision is any event in which a driver was identified as distracted at the time of the crash.

How does distracted driving affect the United States?

Fatal data

- The number of people who died due to distracted driving crashes was 3,179 in 2014, which is an increase from 3,154 deaths in 2013.[1]
- In 2014, nearly one in ten fatal crashes were due to a distraction. These crashes involved 2,955 distracted drivers, as some crashes involved more than one distracted driver.[1]
- The top distraction while driving is the use of a cell phone, and cell phones were involved in 385 fatal crashes in 2014.[1] However, cell phone use may not be indicated in the crash report and the true burden is underreported.[2]
- Each day, nearly nine people are killed in crashes that involve a distracted driver. [1]
- In 2014, 84% of the fatalities in distraction-affected crashes involved motor vehicle occupants or motorcyclists.[1]
- In 2014, 520 non-occupants such as pedestrians and bicyclists were killed in distraction- related crashes.[1]
- Drivers in their twenties make up 29% of the distracted drivers in fatal crashes.[1]

Non-fatal data

- Each day, 1,180 people are injured in crashes that involve a distracted driver.[1]
- There were 297,000 distraction-affected injury crashes in 2014, which represents 18% of all crashes. In these crashes, 306,000 drivers were distracted at the time of the crash, indicating more than one driver could be distracted during a crash incident.[1]
- In 2014, there were an estimate 431,000 people injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver, which is an increase from 424,000 people injured in 2013, 421,000 in 2012 and 387,000 people injured in 2011.[1]
- An estimated 33,000 people were injured in 2014 in crashes specifically involving cell phones.[1]
- In the U.S., 31% of drivers ages 18 to 64 reported that they had read or sent text messages or email messages while driving at least once within the last 30 days. Additionally, 69% of drivers in the U.S. in the same age group reported that they had talked on their cell phone while driving within the last 30 days.[3]

Cost data

- Crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted cost $46 billion in 2010, which represented 17% of the total economic loss and cost of motor vehicle crashes.[4]
- Distracted driving caused $129 billion in 2010 in societal harm, as measured by comprehensive costs, representing 15% of the total harm caused by motor vehicle collisions.[4]

How does distracted driving affect Indiana?

- In 2014, there were 9,177 motor vehicle collisions in Indiana due to distraction. Of these collisions, 1,071 involved a driver that was distracted by a cell phone. This is a slight increase from the previous year with 1,068 cell phone-distracted collisions.[5]
- There were six fatal collisions due to distraction from cell phones in 2014, in which all fatalities were the drivers in the collision.[5]
- It is estimated the economic cost of traffic collisions due to distraction was $197.5 million in 2014.[5]
- The average economic cost of traffic collision due to any distraction was $21,518, and specific to cell phone distraction, the average economic cost was $24,665.[5]
- The highest number of distraction-related collisions occurred during August, September, and October in 2014.[5]
- Distraction-related collisions occurred the most during noon to 5:59 p.m. each day.[5]
- 33% of high school students, including 67% of 12th graders reported having texted or emailed while driving a car or other vehicle at least once during the past month, according to the 2011 Indiana Youth Risk Behavior Survey.[6]

How do we address this problem?

Data collection:

- The Indiana State Police maintain the **Automated Reporting Information Exchange System (ARIES)**, which captures vehicle crash data, including distracted driving related crashes. The data are used as the analytical foundation for traffic safety program planning and design in Indiana.

Policy:

- Primary laws allow law enforcement to stop vehicles simply because occupants for a specific traffic violation, and are more effective than secondary laws, which require that a vehicle be stopped for some other traffic violation.
    - Ban on all telecommunication device use (handheld and hands-free) for novice drivers (under age 18) with the exception of a 9-1-1 emergency call (Primary law). [8]
    - Ban on texting while driving for all drivers (Primary law).[8]
- **Graduated Drivers Licensing** (GDL) implementation in 2009 and 2010 led to a 29% decrease in teen driver (15 to 17 year old) collisions between 2009 and 2012. The GDL law seeks to reduce the number of young driver collisions by reducing driver distractions and building driver experiences through supervision.

Programs:

- The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) **Traffic Safety Division** manages federal funds that are allocated throughout Indiana to support programs designed to fulfill its mission: "To reduce death, injury, property damage and economic cost associated with traffic crashes on Indiana's roadways." The ICJI Traffic Safety Division publishes an annual Indiana Highway Safety Plan, which includes programs and resources to prevent distracted driving injuries and fatalities. The **Rule the Road Teen Driving** program educates young drivers and their parents about the GDL law, basic car maintenance, seat belt safety and the dangers of distracted and impaired driving.

Education:

- The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers teamed up to launch the national public service campaign of "**Decide to Drive**" in 2011, which aims to affect behavior changes relating to driver distractions that pose a threat to drivers, passengers and pedestrians.[9]
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) designates April as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The paid media campaign focuses on the primary message of **U Drive. U Text. U Pay.**
- NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation created a **pledge to end distracted driving** by driving phone-free. Website: http://www.distraction.gov/take-action/take-the-pledge.html.

- Employers can foster a culture of workplace safety and health by discouraging use of cell phones while driving by developing a motor vehicle safety policy. **INSafe**, the Indiana Department of Labor's OSHA consultation program, provides employers with free onsite consultation, outreach, training and education. INSafe's resources are designed to assist employers to further advance the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace.
- The **Indiana Department of Labor** encourages employers to **declare vehicles as "text-free zones."** As of July 1, 2011, texting and emailing, including reading and/or responding while driving, is against the law and violators may face fines.

Measures:

While not included as objectives in Healthy People 2020, there are several emerging issues in injury and violence prevention that need further research, analysis and monitoring. For unintentional injuries, there is a need to better understand the trends, causes and preventions strategies for motor vehicle crashes due to distracted driving.
Related Healthy People 2020 Goals:
Injury and Violence Prevention (IVP)-13: Reduce motor vehicle crash-related deaths.

IVP-13.1: Reduce motor vehicle crash-related deaths per 100,000 population.
IVP-13.2: Reduce motor vehicle crash-related deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled.
IVP-14: Reduce non-fatal motor vehicle crash-related injuries.

Additional resources:

a. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety: http://www.saferoads.org
b. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons Decide to Drive: http://www.decidetodrive.org/
c. CDC Distracted Driving: http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/
d. Indiana Department of Labor Distracted Driving: http://in.gov/dol/2873.htm
e. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov
f. National Safety Council: Distracted Driving: http://www.nsc.org/safety_road/Distracted_Driving/Pages/distracted_driving.aspx
g. Official U.S. Government Website for Distracted Driving: http://www.distraction.gov/index.html

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7. Nagle, M. (2011). Indiana 2010 Traffic Safety Facts: Effects of Graduated Driver Licensing on Crash Outcomes in Indiana. Retrieved from http://www.in.gov/cji/files/T_GDL_Effects_2010.pdf.
8. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. State Laws. Retrieved from DISTRACTION.GOV: Official US Government Website for Distracted Driving: http://www.distraction.gov/stats-research-laws/state-laws.html.
9. Decide to Drive. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Retrieved from http://www.decidetodrive.org/.