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Take Steps to Avoid Distracted Driving

by Jonathan Jaramillo

It is a little-known fact that driving distracted at 55 mph typically results in traveling the length of a football field, approximately 100 yards, without looking at the road. Could you imagine the devastation that can come about from drivers simply taking their focus off the road for a short time?

Over the past four years, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has placed a special emphasis on eliminating distracted driving. Distracted driving comes in three forms:

- Cognitive distraction. Cognitive or mental distraction is when a driver's mind isn't focused on driving.
- Visual distraction. Visual distraction occurs when a driver looks at anything other than the road ahead.
- Manual distraction.

As such, the NHTSA, with other entities such as the National Safety Council, has proclaimed April as National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

During National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, we encourage everyone to take part in the [pledge](#) to drive device-free. You are pledging to your family, friends and your community that you give all of your attention to your roadway community while driving. By taking this pledge you will refrain from:

- Conversations via phone – handheld, hands-free or Bluetooth.
- Sending texts or Snapchats.
- Using your vehicle's voice-to-text features.
- Updating social media platforms.
- Sending or reading emails.
- Taking photos or videos.
- Programming destinations into GPS while your vehicle is moving.
- Calling or texting others while they are driving.

A [Wreck-less Checklist](#) was created by [DecidetoDrive.org](#). It helps promote some basic, but effective, steps before starting your vehicle that can help prevent distracted driving.

Fatal Crashes Affected By Distracted Drivers – 2016

	Crashes	Drivers	Fatalities
Total Fatal Crashes	34,439	51,914	37,461
Number of distracted-affected fatal crashes	3,157	3,210	3,450
Percent of total fatal crashes	9%	6%	9%
Number of cellphone distracted-affected fatal crashes	444	457	486
Percent of fatal distracted-affected crashes	14%	14%	14%

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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