

Safe Driving is No Accident

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans age two to 34.

A total of 41,059 people lost their lives in motor vehicle accidents in 2007 (the latest year for statistics) and another 2.5 million people were injured. Of those who were killed, 32 percent died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes and 35 percent were not wearing seatbelts.

You Hold the Keys

Safe driving starts even before you put the key in the ignition. Keep your vehicle well maintained and do a simple safety check before you drive. Brakes, steering, lights and horn should be in good working order. Look for any fluid leaks and check that tires are properly inflated and the treads are not worn.

Good visibility is essential to safe driving. Mirrors, windows and windshield should be clean—inside and out—for maximum visibility and minimum glare. Replace worn windshield wipers and keep your windshield washer fluid topped up. In colder climates, clear your vehicle—especially the windows and lights—of snow or ice before starting out, and repeat as necessary throughout your trip.

Headlights and tail-lights should also be kept clean. Dirt on the lenses can reduce the light by 50 percent. Headlights not only help you to



see where you are going, they also help other drivers see you. A car is visible for nearly four times the distance with its headlights on, even during daytime.

When you get behind the wheel, adjust all mirrors and your seat before putting the car in motion. Position your headrest and buckle up. Always wear your seatbelt—and wear it correctly. Straps should fit snugly over your shoulder and across your lap.

Hey! Pay Attention

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute's (VTTI) 2006 landmark research report found that driver inattention is the leading factor in most crashes and near-crashes. Nearly 80 percent of crashes

and 65 percent of near-crashes involved some sort of driver inattention within three seconds before the event.

The primary causes of driver inattention are distracting activities and drowsiness.

Drowsiness is a significant problem that increases a driver's risk of a crash or near-crash by at least a factor of four. It's likely that the risk factor is higher, because drowsy driving is under-reported in police crash investigations.

Reaching for a moving object increased the risk of a crash or near-crash by fully nine times. Is trying to retrieve a CD that keeps rolling beyond your grasp worth the risk?

The most common distraction for drivers is the use of cell phones. The number of crashes or near-crashes attributable to dialing is nearly identical to the number associated with talking or listening. Dialing is riskier because it takes the driver's eyes off the road. So, even though dialing happens less often, it still increases the risk of a crash by almost three times.

The safest way to use your cell phone or two-way radio is to pull over in a safe spot and stop.

A Word or Two on Texting

Any activity that draws drivers' eyes away from the roadway—or their hands from the wheel—has the potential to lead to an inattention-related crash. VTTI's research showed that drivers sending or receiving a text message take their eyes off the road for nearly five seconds at a time. That equates to a driver traveling the length of a football field at 55 miles per hour without looking at the roadway. At higher highway speeds, the distance increases.

In light of a number of deadly accidents involving text-messaging behind the wheel, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has organized a summit for September 30 and October 1 to discuss ideas about how to combat the dangers of distracted driving.

On the Road to Safety

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) sponsors a national "Drive Safely Work Week" during the first week of October. For suggested daily activities to help build strategies to minimize distractions while behind the wheel visit <http://trafficsafety.org>.

Securitas security officers who drive on the job must complete a safe driving course. Find additional tips on how to guard against drowsy driving, and how to reduce other driving risks in the January 2006 issue of *Security Spotlight*.

New Rules of the Road

Securitas has specific rules about the use of cell phones, smartphones, and radios while driving on duty – their use is not permitted unless you're using a hands-free device or making an emergency call. This rule applies not only to cars and trucks (no matter who owns them), but also to security carts, personal mobility vehicles (like Segways and T3s), bicycles and boats.

More and more states and localities are banning the use of cell phones and handheld devices for texting while driving. The Governor's Highway Safety Administration (GHSA) recommends that drivers don't use cell phones or other electronic devices, regardless of the current law. For the current status of laws in your state, visit www.ghsa.org.

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