



Distractions

A moment's inattention could have fatal consequences

The Facts

- For the majority of us, driving is one of the few daily tasks where we're making regular life and death decisions; distractions which reduce our concentration could cause a crash
- A 'teleporter journey' is when a driver arrives at the destination without remembering anything about it. This is a serious indication that the driver hasn't been concentrating on the driving task and distraction could be a major contributor to the problem
- Anything that distracts you from the driving task will increase your reaction time, which in turn delays your response, bringing you closer to the problem and increasing your risk of collision
- The reaction time for an alert driver is 0.98 seconds on average. Those on a hands free phone took 1.25 seconds and those on a hand held phone took 1.46 seconds [1]
- When using a hand held phone you could cover 45 metres during your reaction time travelling at 70mph, compared with 31 metres if you were alert to the driving task [1]
- A phone conversation while driving is much more distracting than a normal conversation with a passenger. On the phone you have to work harder to understand the meaning of a conversation, because meaning gained from tone of voice and body language is lost [1]
- Distractions such as texting, tweeting and emailing all take your hands, eyes and mind off the road, significantly increasing your risk of collision

The Advice

- Try to identify what non driving-related thoughts you have when you are behind the wheel, so that you can make a conscious effort to avoid these distractions
- Use driving time just for driving. Use it to enhance your driving skills; try to anticipate what may happen next by picking up small clues known as 'observation links'
- A good way to measure if you are improving your concentration is to acknowledge how less often you get caught up in someone else's errors
- Avoid distractions that take your eyes away from the road, such as altering a route on a satellite navigation system, adjusting music systems, reading maps or interacting with mobile phones (even those in a cradle)
- Many drivers blame distractions for the reason they exceed the legal speed limit; this increases the likelihood of an incident and a speeding conviction
- Driving if you are tired will make you more susceptible to distraction and significantly reduce your reaction time, which in turn increases your risk of having a collision
- Check the warnings on any new medication you need to take if you have to drive, as it may affect your ability concentrate and to react quickly
- At the beginning of any journey ask yourself what you are trying to achieve and keep focused on that. The top priority for any journey should be to arrive safely. If you experience a 'teleporter journey', acknowledge it as an issue that you have to address

Sources [1] TRL Research, funded by Direct Line