A blurred photograph of a car accident scene. A white car is in the foreground, and a person is visible in the driver's seat. The background shows a road and some trees. The text "Module 7 Distractions" is overlaid in large blue font.

Module 7 Distractions

Acknowledgements

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The information provided herein is accurate and current pursuant to the Program of Organized Instruction for Driver Education and Traffic Safety adopted by rule on February 2009.

Prior to starting the Parent Taught Driver Education Model Program Course 101, you must receive your student's Parent Taught Packet from the Texas Department of Public Safety. To receive the packet, the parent must submit the application (DL92 — Request For a Parent Taught Packet). Each student should be registered separately with the Texas Department of Public Safety for the Parent Taught Driver Education Program. You can locate the application on the following web site:

<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/internetforms/Forms/DL-92.pdf>

Education Service Center, Region 13 and Texas Department of Transportation

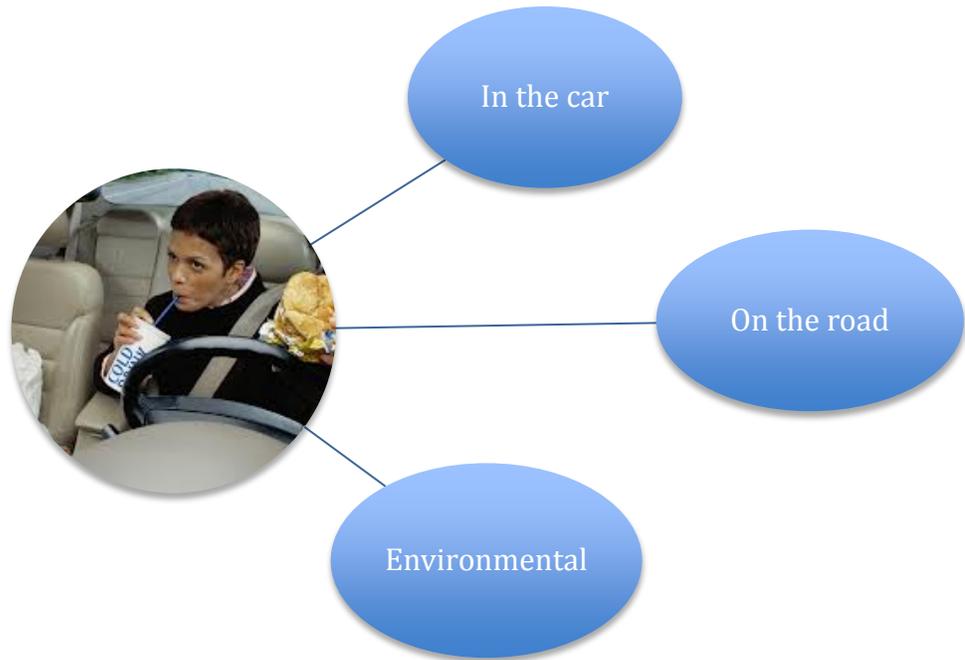
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Distractions

Distracted driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in while operating a motor vehicle. Such activities have the potential to take the attention of the person off the primary task of driving the motor vehicle and increase the risk of crashing.



Fast Facts:

- 32, 410 people killed each year in motor vehicle crashes
 - of these, distraction is a factor in approximately 10% of these fatal crashes
 - In 2011, for example, nearly 3,331 people died in crashes involving distracted driving
- **In Texas it is illegal for anyone under 18 years of age to use a cell phone, including texting, while driving.** (Emergency use is permitted. * TRC 454.424)



Distractions: Objectives

Section Objectives:

1. Describe examples of distractions for drivers
 - a. Novice
 - b. Experienced
2. Illustrate the effect of using cell phones including text messaging, playing music or other uses of such a device while engaged in the primary task of driving.
3. Demonstrate how distraction impacts the ability of a driver to implement the safe driving and risk-reducing practices that are part of the Driver Education and Traffic Safety Program. Further demonstrate how distraction impacts a driver's ability in controlled, low, moderate, and complex task driving environments.
4. Demonstrate how distractions are reduced by managing vehicle operating space, line of sight, path of travel, lane placement, right-of-way, following interval, vehicle speed, and communication.
5. Explain how distractions are reduced when novice drivers limit passenger, avoid higher risk driving situations such as night driving and driving environments that are higher risk for novice driving skill levels.
6. Introduce some strategies such as countermeasures to limit and manage distractions in driving environments with various levels of task complexity and riskiness, such as night driving or driving in inclement weather.
7. Describe some strategies that will help novice drivers recognize situations where other distracted drivers may be a hazard.

Distractions: Definitions

The primary responsibility and the only task that a driver has in a motor vehicle is to operate that motor vehicle safely. This task requires full attention and focus, whether the driver is a novice or experienced driver.

Why: because each individual driver is on the roadways with all other drivers. There is no guarantee that any other driver at any moment in time is paying full attention to the task of driving. Drivers should resist in engaging in any activity that takes their eyes and attention off the road. Even when scanning the mirrors that are placed to assist in proper driving the focus is always on road conditions. Even a second or two of attention off the road can be the factor in a crash.

Of special concern is the increased use of personal electronic devices for communication and entertainment, especially cell phones. Other devices, such as navigation aids, are also of concern. The risk of using a cell phone or other such device while driving has been assessed over the past decade and the numbers are alarming.

In 2011, according to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Association-Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 3,331 fatal crashes in the USA on the roadways were due to distracted driving behaviors. That year, 32, 410 deaths were due to crashes, so 10% of the overall death rate was due to distracted driving. When those deaths are divided by age, drivers who were in fatal crashes involving distraction were most likely 16-29 years of age. So, young drivers are particularly at risk of dying in crashes that are due to distraction.

There are four main types of distractions: Visual, Manual, Cognitive, and Auditory.

Visual-taking your eyes off the road for any reason (looking at passengers/friends, to look at a phone, to search in a purse)



Manual-taking your hands off the wheel for any reason (to gesture when talking to a passenger, to text, to smoke or eat)



Cognitive-taking your mind off the task of driving



Auditory – hearing something not related to driving





ZERO Fatalities
A Goal We Can All Live With

1085 Echo
<http://ut.zerofatalities.com/index.php>

This video was produced in Utah. Texas' laws concerning cell phone use and texting may differ.

Distractions: Research on texting, distractions, and the brain

To start assessing the problems with texting and driving, it is important to discuss current research on the brain and attention, because this research can explain why texting is such a dangerous thing to do when driving.

Your brain works to process all the information that is being sent to it from your senses and your body. Sight, smell, sound, feelings of movement are all transmitted from the parts of your sensory nervous system to your brain, where your brain translates that information and then sends messages back out to your body in response.

But your brain is translating so much information it has to set up some kind of system to prioritize what to translate first, then second, and so on. Human Factors studies how these decisions are made under various conditions and how attention gets allocated, or divided up, when faced with many simultaneous events. In other words, how your brain decides what to focus attention on and what to ignore.

Human Factors research tells us that the brain is not really good at processing two or more things of equal importance at one time. So, for example, if you are driving and texting, your brain is going to determine that one of these tasks is more important than the other. Operating a 3000-pound vehicle that is travelling down a roadway at speed may become less important than "LOL OMG". And that is how distraction happens.

But is that all? No, of course not. Driving is not a simple task. Driving under the numerous weather and time conditions as well as the various kinds of roadways also are factors that must be taken into account. But texting and driving is not a safe choice regardless, yet many young drivers continue to make the decision to text while driving.



Why does this occur? As discussed, the brain processes information in a hierarchy. But also, the brain filters information due to the perceptions of the individual concerning the seriousness of the information. For example, the idea of risk-taking while driving a car is seen differently according to the developmental stage of the driver's brain.

During adolescence, when most people in the USA learn to drive, there are many developmental processes occurring in the brain. A teenager and a parent may often view a situation that is on the road ahead in the same way, but the teenager will process the event much differently than the parent simply because the teenager's brain is not wired the same way.

This is not an excuse for teenagers, it is a warning that teenagers need to learn how to assess potentially dangerous situations based upon how their brains work, not their parents' brains. Simply telling a teenager that something is dangerous or even explaining that the brain works in a certain manner may not be enough. According to current research in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine that compared crash fatalities of young males attributed to risk-taking from 1982 to 2004, there was no reduction in yearly rates. That means that even knowing that behaviors like texting are dangerous isn't enough to stop young men from taking the risk. The outcome remains the same.

The term that is used most often to describe the potential for harm is called risk. Young drivers are seen to be especially at-risk for distracted driving. Risk can be managed. There are many young drivers who are capable of operating a vehicle in a manner that creates a low level of risk for themselves or others.

Young drivers are also not alone in risky driving habits. Higher risk drivers may be novice or experienced in the car, but have a group of habits or behaviors that place them especially at risk. Driving is an activity that uses all the senses and also places a burden on the ability of the driver to access a situation in a very short amount of time, and act to avoid any potential threat.

If a driver is distracted or driving in an unsafe manner, there may be no chance to avoid the crash. One of the main reasons crashes occur is a lack of time to process the danger ahead as it is happening and to be in a position mentally and physically to respond.



Photo Courtesy AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

**ONE TEXT OR CALL COULD
WRECK
IT ALL**

Another important factor with teenagers is peer interaction. Most teenagers can't wait to drive because that means freedom and friends. And many parents are grateful when a teen is able to drive on their own because that means less chauffeuring to sports practice or dance practice or parties or work. But that addition of friends can be deadly. And there is brain research and behavior research to support the idea that the influence of peers is not only more important to a teen than that of an adult, but often more dangerous as well.

The National Young-Driver Survey is a survey that asked young drivers about their perspectives on risk and other factors associated with driver safety. Emotional state, interactions in the car, and inexperience were areas that teens differed greatly from adults in the judgment of possible risks to driving safety.

Consider a scenario of a novice driver with a group of friends who get into an argument on the road. The teen is less likely to judge this a risk for safety than an adult, yet there are indications that many crashes occur due to interactions between a teen driver and the passenger or passengers in the vehicle. Also, the idea of inexperience was found to be completely different to a teenager than an adult. To the teens in this survey, inexperience meant no license, not number of hours of actual driving experience.

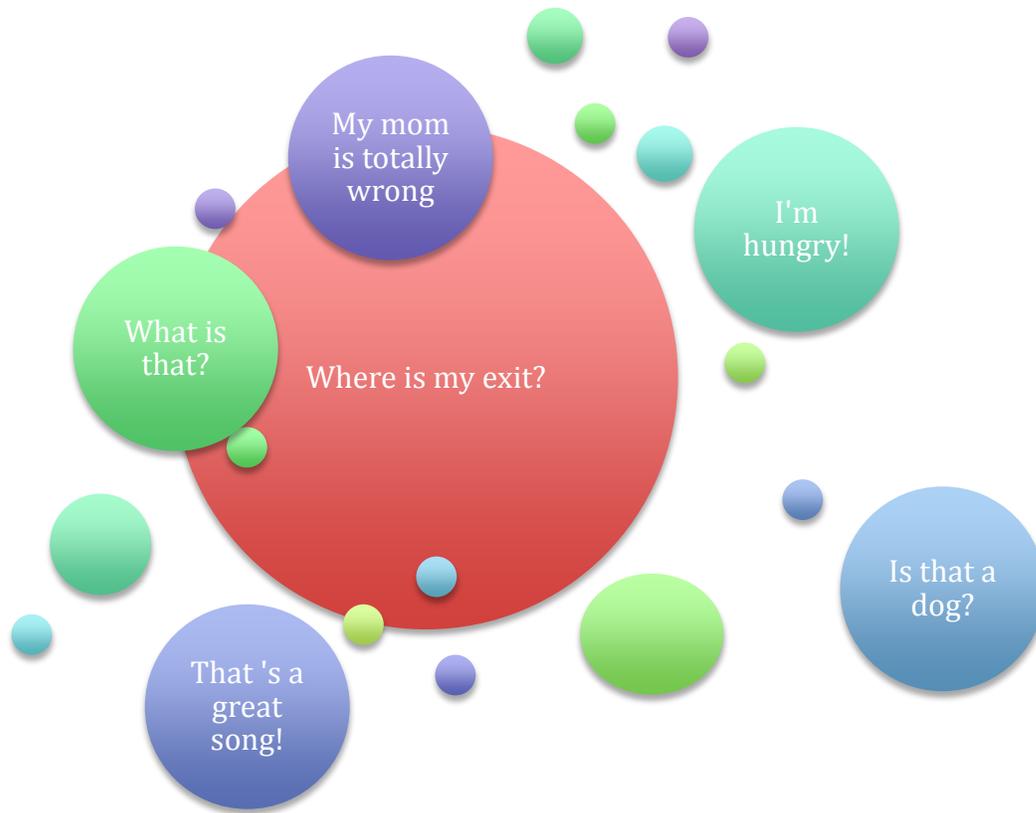


Also, behavioral research indicates that when in a group, a teen is more likely to be swayed by the group concerning risk than when that teen is alone. So, if a teen is in a car with friends, and they are texting other friends, chances are the driver may also text, even if the driver would not text if he or she were by his or herself. There are ways to overcome these developmental tendencies. Research also shows that practice in real-life scenarios under controlled conditions, if repeated often enough, can help teenagers learn the skills they need to assess potential risks on the road. These skills are mental and physical and are crucial to the safe driving experience. Learning to avoid texting while driving can be accomplished. Teens are fully capable of making good decisions about this major driving risk if given the proper training and skills to do so.

All of the information that is available to date would support a total ban on texting while driving. There is a consensus among researchers across multiple disciplines that texting while driving a moving vehicle are not compatible and should be avoided at all costs. Exceptions to this will be discussed below.



Driver Attention Matrix:



Distractions: Other distractions

Vehicle Occupants:

As was mentioned above in the texting segment, vehicle occupants, probably other teens, are a potential hazardous distraction to novice drivers. There are many things that passengers may do that could lead to the attention of the driver being taken off the road ahead.

Current research indicates that for young drivers, the greater the number of similarly aged occupants aboard, the more likely a crash is to occur. This research and other research in this area, has led many states to restrict the number of similarly aged occupants that can be in a vehicle with a novice driver.



In-vehicle distractions are only part of the picture. Many events that may occur outside the vehicle have the potential to distract a driver's attention. A crash scene itself has been found to hold the eye of a driver long past the place where the crash site is located. This is commonly called "rubbernecking".

Other attention-grabbing events may be relatively rare or surprising, such as a hot air balloon or a horse in the road. Whatever the event, strategies and skills should be in place to prevent these things from causing a lapse of attention on the driving task.

Cell phones:

The texting issue has been discussed. Parents and teens are reluctant to remove the cell phone from the possession of the teen while driving for reasons such as safety. Since this is a legitimate reason, rules and restrictions are the most helpful and successful ways to limit the use of cell phones in the car.



Music or other electronics:

There are many electronic aids that automobile manufacturers are including in vehicles such as navigation. The universal use of a phone or an iPod for music is also one of the concerns that driver education seeks to address. Addressing the safe and timely use of these devices is also a task of driver education.

In Summary:

Distractions can occur while driving and young drivers are especially at-risk of being distracted while driving for developmental, cognitive, and social reasons. Distracted driving can cause crashes, which are more often fatal among the youngest driving cohort. Developing a plan and practicing skills that can prevent distractions from occurring is the best way to help novice drivers' deal with the potential of distracted driving.



An end result is that as drivers focus their attention on items not related to driving tasks, the driver starts to display "inattention blindness", particularly as unrelated tasks become more complicated. This means the driver "looks" but does not "see" what is occurring in the traffic scene. "It is estimated that drivers using a cell phone may fail to see up to 50% of the available information in their driving environment" (Strayer 2007)"

Distractions: Objectives

Answering the Objectives:

1. This section has given examples of distractions for novice drivers, but the same distractions are also familiar to experienced drivers. There is some indication that experienced drivers may need reminders of the ways that they are managing the driving task due to being lulled into a false sense of security because they have been driving for a number of years. A partial list of distractions follows this section.
2. The affects of using a cell phone to talk or text another person or to play music is well documented in the crash statistics literature. This is the number one distraction that can lead to fatalities in crashes caused by distracted driving.
3. The ability of a driver to implement strategies to avoid crashes is limited by the amount of time that a driver has to begin to respond. The crash literature and the human-factors research on how the mind chooses what to pay attention to and how fast to respond is a clear proof that distractions reduce the ability of a driver to utilize crash avoidance techniques.
4. Research has indicated that the most effective ways to avoid crashes are by maintaining and using safe driving practices including road management. Distractions alter the ability of the driver to manage the vehicle on the road.
5. Research has shown that when novice drivers limit passengers in the vehicle and avoid higher risk situations such as night driving or driving in inclement weather, crashes due to distraction in the young driver cohort are reduced.
6. The list of strategies and tasks in this document plus the standards that are part of the TX-PTDE program have been developed to accomplish the goals of creating knowledgeable and safe novice drivers.
7. Examples of strategies to avoid distracted driving are found at the end of the section.

Distractions: Strategies and Techniques for managing distractions

SEE space management:

Using the SEE approach for managing the space around the vehicle. SEE stands for Search, Evaluate, Execute and is a part of Driver Training Education in the state of Texas. It is a system that teaches young drivers to manage the space around the vehicle on the roadway and to adjust to the fluid nature of the driving experience in a manner that maintains safe conditions for the driver and other motorists on the road.

This system is a mental driving system and it allows the driver to develop a habit of using the eyes to search for information that the brain needs to process. Such a driving system allows the driver time to evaluate the path of travel and the line of sight for problems, so the time available to execute a change in speed or position and communicate intentions to others.



Driving plans:

Driving plans are agreements set up between parents and young drivers that spell out the conditions and circumstances that the novice driver has permission or is able to use a vehicle. Usually these plans include routes to and from approved destinations; number of passengers allowed, if any; times of day and/or night driving is allowed; time allowed to arrive at destinations or to return home; cell phone restrictions; safety belts; geographic boundaries; reason for driving; and other personal agreements between parents and young drivers. This is an effective strategy that limits the stress and the potential for risky driving which teens might otherwise choose.

Practice and Drill:

Part of driver education is the practice of the actual skills of driving. Everything from the routine before one enters the car to entering the car but before starting the motor, to starting the motor, to driving. Each step is an opportunity to develop mastery in the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

Questions about why should one do certain tasks need to be answered from the initial sessions of driver education. Then, in the course of addressing the importance of these tasks, a prime opportunity is created for driver educators to re-enforce safe driving habits like adjusting mirrors and fastening safety belts prior to starting the car. These tasks can be accomplished in the classroom as well as in the vehicle and mental as well as physical practice is demonstrated to increase the probability that a task will be performed.

Causes of distractions: May be visual, manual, cognitive, or auditory.

In-car	Outside car	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phone use (any kind) • Adjusting music • Charging devices • Reaching for dropped object • Throwing away trash • Food • Grooming • Smoking • Adjusting vehicle controls • Navigation system • Reading • Drinking • Occupants • High music volume • Preparing to eat • Choking on food • Talking or arguing with passenger • Passenger behavior • Child/infant distraction • Looking at passenger • Loose objects • Pet (loose or barking) • Insect (biting, flying) • Object rolling under vehicle pedals • Rolling window up or down • Writing • Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animals on road or side of road • Other vehicle actions • Crash scenes • Signs on road • Weather • Road construction • Emergency vehicle • Police • Bright vehicle lights • Officer directing traffic • Sunrise or sunset • People in the roadway • Objects on the road • Hills • Trees • Bicyclists • Motorcyclists • Obstructed view • Tire blowout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angry • Upset • Nervous • Sad • Happy • Sleepy • Under narcotic influence • Under alcohol influence • Medications • Illness • Feeling lost or not having a route to drive

Distractions:

Laws or Ordinances:

- ✓ In Texas it is illegal for anyone under 18 year of age to use a cell phone (wireless communication device) including texting while driving unless it is an emergency.
- ✓ City ordinance, Austin, TX § 12-1-34 ELECTRONIC MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING.
 - (A) A driver of a motor vehicle may not use a wireless communication device to view, send, or compose an electronic message or engage other application software while operating a motor vehicle.
 - (B) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of an offense under this section if a wireless communications device is used:
 - While the vehicle is stopped;
 - Strictly to engage in a telephone conversation, including dialing or deactivating the call;
 - As a global positioning or navigation system that is affixed to the vehicle;
 - For obtaining emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency, or serious traffic hazard, or to prevent a crime about to be committed;
 - In the reasonable belief that a person's life or safety is in immediate danger;
 - If the device is permanently installed inside the vehicle; or
 - Solely in a voice-activated or other hands-free mode.
- ✓ Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ban prohibits commercial vehicle drivers from texting while behind the wheel
- ✓ Many States have laws banning certain type of distractions. Currently 21 States and the District of Columbia prohibit novice drivers from using electronic communication devices (including cell phones) during the learners and intermediate stages of a three-stage graduated driver license (GDL) program. Six States ban hand held cell phone use for all drivers, and 19 States ban texting by all drivers.



Complex Driving Tasks:

Objectives:

1. Explain complex driving tasks that are necessary to perform vehicle operation and control procedures for each vehicle movement.
2. Demonstrate how and why complex driving tasks often distract drivers and other roadway users including vulnerable roadway users by dividing attention.
3. Discuss how inappropriate management of complex driving task performance and distraction causes the type of crash encountered by novice drivers as reported by the Texas Department of Transportation, including single vehicle crashes.
4. Introduce and facilitate the development and practice of counter-measures to limit and manage complex driving tasks.
5. Encourage and support skill acquisition that may reduce risk of crashes by safely and legally managing complex driving tasks.



**This is a more appropriate kind of illustration of complex tasks/conditions

Complex Driving Tasks:

Driving is a skill that requires performance of complex driving tasks to ensure the safe, legal, and responsible operation of a motor vehicle on a roadway. At times this may mean the driver will have attention changes from the path of travel to traffic, roadway, weather conditions, vehicle, gauges, and back to the path of travel. Failure to correctly re-direct attention back to the path of travel in a timely fashion may lead to unsafe driving or crashes.



Serial re-direction of attention is often called “scanning” in driver education, and is meant to be a methodical, rapid shift of attention from path of travel to mirror to gauges and back to path of travel. Attention is never divided. The brain, as has been mentioned in the distraction section, cannot process more than two items at once and will prioritize one item of attention over the other, so dividing attention is not a correct term to use and might erroneously indicate to novice drivers a false sense of abilities in this area.

Included in the complex driving task are things such as signaling, checking the instrument panel, changing gears, checking gauges, checking mirrors, checking blind spots, checking speed, checking lane position, accelerating, braking, or a combination of these tasks. However, it is important to recognize that re-directing attention from the path of travel while completing some of these complex driving tasks means that the vehicle is moving on the roadway without the driver seeing where the vehicle is going or mentally processing any new information from the path of travel during the time of re-directed attention.

Because of this it is very important that the driver become very familiar with the vehicle’s control devices. A driver must be able to reach without looking to activate the signal lever, gearshift, headlights, windshield wipers, and other necessary instrumentation on the dashboard. Driver educators should demonstrate and drill with novice drivers both in the classroom and in the vehicle in order to emphasize the importance of acquiring mastery of these tasks.

While time management is a factor in re-directing attention, it is likely that novice drivers would be unable to judge a ½ second of time. Rather, the more helpful method might be to establish a routine of left mirror, path of travel, rear view mirror, path of travel, right side mirror, path of travel. The most current driver education techniques actually suggest a move away from a scanning methodology.



The idea is that if there is anything in the other lanes, those lanes are not available. Therefore there is no need to keep scanning those lanes unless or until the driver desires to change lanes in order to exit the roadway or avoid an obstacle. The

advantage for a novice driver is simply less to have to process while in the initial phases of roadway driving as well as the re-emphasis of keeping eyes on the path of travel.

To continue, a driver should never allow the performance of complex driving tasks to become a distraction that keeps the driver from re-directing attention back to the path of travel and the conditions immediately occurring. Techniques to effectively manage re-directing attention might well include defensive driving techniques in the event the driver must move to avoid an obstacle or respond to a rapidly evolving danger in the roadway ahead.

In the performance of complex driving tasks, the novice driver is likely to experience confusion and anxiety as the acquisition of skills begins, as well as feelings of exhilaration and freedom. As mentioned in the distraction module, the adolescent brain processes information differently than the adult brain. What may seem risky to an adult may not seem risky to an adolescent. A false sense of ability is often encountered in novice drivers and the most effective way to manage this is through skills acquisition and practice.



Failure to effectively manage complex driving tasks is found to be a possible contributing factor in single vehicle crashes. The State of Texas Department of Transportation compiles statistics that list cause of crashes each year. These statistics include contributing factors in crashes. If one were to read the list of contributing factors, it is possible to suggest that many of these contributing factors are related to complex driving tasks. Unfortunately, in single driver fatal crashes, there is no way to ascertain exactly what occurred prior to the crash. This does not mitigate the responsibility of the driver to manage complex driving tasks.





Objectives: Complex Driving Tasks:

Answering the Objectives:

1. The chart included in this document lists some, but not all, of the complex driving tasks necessary for safe and effective operation of a motor vehicle. An explanation of select complex driving tasks has been included but is not meant to be exhaustive, merely illustrative.
2. Novice drivers are more likely to be distracted due to management of complex driving tasks, but as research indicates, complex driving tasks may be distracting to experienced drivers as well, so strategies and procedures should be in place to manage complex driving tasks safely and responsibly.
3. Complex driving tasks are understood to contribute to distracted driving and should be managed by novice and experienced drivers in order to assure safety in the motor vehicle and on the roadway. Crash statistics indicate possible relationships between in-effective management of complex driving tasks and crashes.
4. Strategies and techniques for managing and performing complex driving tasks should be built into a driver education curriculum in the classroom and in the vehicle. Repetition has been shown to be the most effective way for novice drivers to acquire skills and techniques for managing complex driving tasks. This skill acquisition may lead to a reduced risk of crashes.
5. Driver education and driver educators seek to facilitate the timely and effective acquisition of skills that allow novice drivers to safely and responsibly manage complex driving tasks and to educate novice drivers about how the brain works and how attention must be directed on the roadway while driving.

Complex Driving Tasks

Critical Driving Behaviors

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vehicle control operation• Vehicle road placement• Vehicle lane placement• Lane changes• Maintaining path of travel while checking speed• Adjusting vehicle speed and lane position while checking for pedestrians, animals, or other vehicles of any type• Using turn signal• Checking mirrors• Braking• Accelerating• Adjusting climate controls• Adjusting lights• Operating windshield wiper• Operating cruise control• Intersection controls• Intersection entry and exit• Entry, apex, and exit to a curve	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining path of travel• Maintaining lane of travel• Maintaining line of sight• Coordinating eye, hand, foot movements• Using repetitive actions• Accomplishing procedural actions• Maintaining mental alertness• Maintaining visual search and recognition actions• Responding to changes by making speed adjustments, position adjustments, and communication of intentions to other drivers
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Videos & PSAs:

Texas Department of Transportation: "Walk & Text PSA" -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpV8QMKgnks&feature=player_detailpage

Teen Driver Source, "Park the Phone. Drive" PSA -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMjTDQBx4&feature=player_detailpage

Distractions.gov, Alex Brown Video – Faces of Distracted Driving –

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDK0iMSkLxY&feature=player_embedded

USDOT, Glee Distracted Driving PSA: "On My Way: PSA

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnw_7xI5klM&feature=player_embedded