

## News Reports

**Distracted Driving 2012**

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has released “Distracted Driving 2012.” This research note from NHTSA’s National Center for Statistics and Analysis discusses distracted driving statistics from 2012. The analysis was based on a data set of known distraction-affected deaths in motor vehicle crashes at the time of publication.

Driver distraction is a specific type of driver inattention. Distraction occurs when drivers divert their attention from the driving task to focus on some other activity. Oftentimes, discussions regarding distracted driving center around cell phone use and texting, but distracted driving also includes other activities, such as eating, talking to other passengers, or adjusting the radio or climate controls, to name but a few. However, while NHTSA may define the terms in this manner, inattention and distraction are often used interchangeably or simultaneously, including in police accident reports.

Distracted driving poses a danger to vehicle occupants as well as non-occupants, such as pedestrians and bicyclists. According to estimates by the NHTSA in 2012:

- There were more than 900,000 distraction-affected crashes in the United States.
- 3,050 fatal crashes involved distraction (10 percent of all fatal crashes); 3,328 people were killed in these crashes, including 540 non-occupants (e.g., pedestrian or bicyclist).
- An estimated 286,000 distracted-affected crashes involved personal injury; an estimated 421,000 people were injured in these crashes.
- More than 600,000 distracted-affected crashes caused only property damage.

Much attention across the country has been devoted to the use of cell phones and other electronic devices while driving. In 2012, 378 fatal crashes were reported to have involved the use of cell phones as a distraction (12% of all fatal distraction-affected crashes). For these distraction-affected crashes, the police accident report stated the driver was talking on, listening to, or manipulating a cell phone (or other cell phone activity) at the time of the crash. Some crashes involved more than one driver being distracted by a cell phone. A total of 415 people died in fatal crashes that involved distraction from the use of cell phones and an estimated 28,000 people were injured. Drivers in their twenties make up 34 percent of the distracted drivers who were using cell phones involved in fatal crashes.

In 2012, 71 percent of the distracted drivers in fatal crashes were male as compared to 73 percent of drivers in all fatal crashes. Additionally, 57 percent of distracted drivers involved in fatal crashes were driving in the daytime (between 6 a.m. and 5:59 p.m.) as compared to 53 percent of drivers in all fatal crashes.

NHTSA’s complete analysis *Distracted Driving 2012* can be accessed at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812012.pdf>.

For additional information on driver distraction, see E&S Commercial Vehicle Report [CV-25-05](#), *Driver Distraction*.

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