



Distracted Driving

Driving is one of the most dangerous activities many of us do every day, and distractions behind the wheel make it even riskier. While cell phone use is one of the most common causes of distracted driving, it's far from the only one. Anything that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, or your mind off the task of driving can increase the chance of a serious collision.

Distractions

We would usually put distracted driving into one of three categories:

1. **Visual or audible distractions** are things that can take your eyes or attention off the road (i.e. looking at GPS, checking kids in rear view mirror etc., conversations etc.);
2. **Manual distractions** are things that cause you to take your hands off the wheel or your feet off the pedals (i.e. searching in bag/glove box, eating/drinking, grooming etc.); and
3. **Cognitive distractions** are things that you are thinking about or feeling that cause you to take your mind off the task of driving (i.e. fatigue, personal issues etc.).

How Bad Is It?

In 2021, Transport Canada's National Collision Database found that distracted driving contributed to an estimated 22.5% of fatal collisions and 25.5% of serious injury collisions. It is estimated that when a driver uses a cell phone, they may fail to see up to 50% of the available information in their driving environment.

What the Law Says

All 10 provinces in Canada now have some form of cell phone/distracted driving legislation in place. The Highway Traffic Act in Newfoundland and Labrador has penalties for:

- Driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons. Fines ranging from \$300 - \$1300 and 4 demerit points.

- Driving without due care and attention or without reasonable consideration for other persons causing bodily harm or death. Minimum fine of \$2000 and a maximum fine of \$20,000 or up to two years imprisonment, or both; license suspension of not more than five years and 6 demerit points.

There are a lot of things that you can do to ensure that your attention stays on the task of driving:

Pre-Trip:

- Make any adjustments to mirrors, temperature, seat etc.
- Secure any loose objects. These can cause a distraction while driving.
- Turn off your cell phone or put on driving mode.
- Plan your route. Set up any GPS, before you leave.
- Ensure that you are well rested and in the right frame of mind to be behind the wheel.
- Give yourself ample time to get where you are going. If you will need to eat, give yourself enough time to stop along the way.

While Driving:

- Do not use any handheld devices.
- Keep noise to a minimum. Noises, such as loud music, can be a distraction.
- Keep your eyes on the road ahead.
- Obey the rules of the road

Discuss

Discuss company policies or rules regarding cell phone use and/or distracted driving.

