



Drive Safe, not Distracted

Driving distractions are becoming more common as car owners use their vehicles as an extension of their home or office and use driving time as an opportunity to manage their social lives. From cell phones to MP3 players to GPS navigation systems, technological breakthroughs have introduced increasingly complex devices to the cabin of a typical car. In Charlotte, driver inattention and distraction was a contributing factor in 23% of all motor vehicle collisions in 2011. *Safe driving is a task that requires concentration and attention.* You can greatly increase your chances of having a safe trip by following the tips below.

- Avoid cell phone use if at all possible. Only use cell phones for emergencies, and even then you should pull off the road to a safe place. Hands-free devices might allow your hands to remain on the wheel, but your mind is still distracted from the task at hand – driving.
- Text messaging and emailing while driving is the most dangerous of all distracted driving actions. It takes your hands off of the wheel, eyes off of the road, and mind off of the task of driving. A few minutes of delay in response is worth avoiding a crash or saving a life.
- Preset your climate control, music system, and GPS device before starting on the road to limit distraction.
- Limit conversations with passengers, particularly if there are multiple passengers. Involvement in conversations reduces your focus on the task at hand.
- If you need directions, direct a passenger to make a phone call or navigate. If driving alone, pull your vehicle over to a safe place to determine your route.
- If you have children, activities and devices that keep your child's behavior under control while driving can be helpful. DVD players, coloring books, and games can limit distractions for the driver. Be sure that any electronic devices can be operated by a passenger or child and do not require driver involvement.
- Pets can be wonderful travel companions, however ensure that your pets are restrained or limited in their access to the driver.
- Eating while driving is one of the most common distractions that can be avoided. Snacks are appropriate and can help a driver remain alert. Three course meals are best left to restaurants or your home.
- Give yourself time to do personal grooming before getting behind the wheel of a car or save it for your destination.
- Distractions outside your vehicle can result in collisions as well. Focus on the driving task, not the collision in the other lane.
- Reading books and newspapers may be a way to pass the time while stuck in traffic, however these activities not only distract you from the driving task, they also cause additional delay for other motorists.