

Driving Distractions 101: Top 5 Reasons Drivers Don't Pay Attention

Driving was once an efficient means of transportation, with strict rules and regulations to keep motorists safe and help them to be courteous to other drivers. In today's fast paced, time-crunching society, driving has become more like a battlefield, where drivers are pitted against each other to see who can make it safely to their destination. So many people multi-task while driving that motorists have never been at a higher risk of being involved in an accident. You see them on your morning commute all the time; people on cell phones, PDAs, even shaving, reading the newspaper, and eating breakfast while driving to work. This creates a hazardous environment for everyone involved. The most common driving distractions are listed below, to inform you of what to watch out for.

#1- Cell Phones

You're driving down the highway, and suddenly you get cut off, nearly causing an accident. Then you notice that the driver is on his cell phone, and not paying attention to the road. You toss a few expletives out the window and honk your horn at him, but he doesn't even notice you. Ten minutes later, you're driving along, and your phone rings. It's your boss, you better answer it. But you aren't like that jerk that cut you off, right? Wrong. No matter how competent you think you are at driving and carrying on a phone conversation, taking that focus away from your mind can always cause a distraction and lead to traffic violations or accidents.

#2- Kids

Oh, how we love our children. Thanks to modern technology, many children are kept peaceful in the car by means of televisions and DVD players, so that mom or dad can focus on driving. Unfortunately, kids are kids, and whether they are entertained or not, they can be a distraction. As soon as Jimmy starts picking on Susie, or Susie has to "go potty," your brain is once again taken away from the task at hand: operating your vehicle. The main reason kids become a distraction, and a dangerous one at that, is because too many parents turn around to talk to them, pick something up for them, or to take something from them, while driving down the road. If you are looking in your backseat, you aren't paying attention. Reaching for things and turning around while driving is a main cause of vehicles winding up in ditches and in minor fender-bender accidents. NEVER turn your back on the road.

#3- Getting Dressed/Putting on Makeup

For every person that gets up an hour early to get ready for work or school, there are another three or four people who simply don't have the time, and do all of their necessary primping while driving. We've seen just about everything, too: men shaving on their way to the office, women putting on a full face of makeup (including eye makeup), people getting dressed, fixing their hair, and so on. If it can be done by getting up a little bit earlier, please do it. Nothing is more frightening than to be driving next to a car where the driver is more focused on their appearance than the road. Take the extra fifteen minutes and do it at home, and make the road a little bit safer for all of us.

#4- Eating While Driving

In today's go-go-go society, you're lucky if you get through a fast food drive thru in less than ten minutes, but what do you do once you get your food? Some people park and eat, while others take it home to enjoy, or to share with their families. Unfortunately, too many people simply chow down while driving, which again distracts them from the task of driving and increases the risk for accidents and traffic violations. Snacking on some fries or even a burger isn't necessarily that bad, but we've all seen people attempting to eat more complicated things while driving. If you've never encountered someone attempting to down a burrito or a salad while driving, consider yourself lucky. Even though most of us have been eating on our own since the early stages of toddlerhood, it's still not a good combination to eat and drive. Especially when you're more focused on your meal than you are on driving. Is it really worth the trouble of causing an accident or risking a traffic violation to save ten minutes? Next time you think about eating while driving, take ten minutes to park and enjoy your food instead.

#5- Stress

This may sound like the odd man out on this list, but if you have a lot on your mind, you're not going to drive as carefully and as focused as the next guy who is only concerned with driving. We all have stresses in life, from bills, to work, to the kids, and so on. Although it's hard, if you can work on shutting down your brain while you drive, you'll decrease your chances of dangerous driving by allowing yourself to focus more on the road and less on your thoughts. We've all sat behind the zoned out driver that sits at a green light for ten or fifteen seconds until someone honks and brings them back to reality. Believe it or not, when many people get in fender benders or run stop lights or signs, the most common response is "I'm sorry, I guess I wasn't paying attention. I had a lot on my mind." If you're that stressed, try yoga, or writing in a journal. Even take ten minutes everyday to sit down

and process all of your stresses and thoughts, so that you don't have to focus on them when you should be focused on driving.

Anything that you do in combination with driving is bad. It doesn't matter if you're on the phone, thinking, eating, getting ready, or tending to the children; it's all a distraction to what should be your only priority: driving safely. The more distractions you allow yourself to have while driving, the more likely you are to end up getting in an accident because you're not paying attention to the road. We all think that we're the best drivers in the world, and that we are fully capable of multi-tasking while driving. Whether or not this is true, you shouldn't do it because you can. Just don't do it because it's safer not to.

About the Author

Rob Skubiak has appeared in courtrooms all over Florida defending his [Florida traffic ticket clients](#). [Official Website of Skubiak and Rivas, P.A. Florida Traffic Ticket attorneys / Florida DUI Lawyers.](#)

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