

## What can you do?

There are several things you can do to prevent crashes caused by distractions:

- Stop perpetuating the myth of multitasking. Accept it. You can't do two things at one time.
- Protect your life and the lives of others by not driving distracted.
- Turn off cellphones and other electronic devices and put them out of reach before starting to drive. No texting while you're driving.
- Set the example for passengers and young drivers by not driving distracted.
- If your driver uses a cellphone, offer to make the call so the driver can direct full attention to driving.
- Plan ahead and eat any meals before driving.
- Know how to get around and know where you're going, so your attention is not on a GPS device.
- Attend to any personal grooming before driving.
- Always wear your safety belt as this is your best defense against unsafe drivers.

**\*Sources:** National Safety Council, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

**GEICO Educational Foundation**  
[www.geico.com/information/safety/auto/safety-library](http://www.geico.com/information/safety/auto/safety-library)

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# The distracted brain



Why is distracted driving so dangerous?

**GEICO**

## **Distracted Driving**

Most people have admitted that they drive distracted. They do it even though they know how dangerous it is. But what's the science behind distracted driving and why can't our brain let us talk on the phone or text while we drive? GEICO explores why by thinking we can "multitask" while driving, we're just fooling ourselves.

### **What is distracted driving?**

Distracted driving is any activity that can divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. There are three types of distractions:

- Visual – Taking your eyes off the road
- Manual – Taking your hands off the wheel
- Cognitive – Taking your mind off driving

**Texting while driving** is the most alarming distracted activity, because it involves all three major distractions.

### **Why do people drive distracted?**

- They believe they can see everything around them, even though they can't.
- They believe they have enough driving experience to multitask.
- They believe they understand the risk of distracted driving, but don't think an accident can happen to them.

## **Can the brain really multitask?**

For years, researchers have stated that the brain can't multitask. It actually switches back and forth between cognitive activities, such as driving and talking on the phone. One is considered a "primary task" and the other is a "secondary task." Although the brain can switch back and forth, it's unable to give full attention to two complex tasks at same time.

When the brain is overloaded with information, it filters out details. The driver is unaware of what's being filtered out and the information doesn't go into memory. This can cause drivers to miss critical information such as red lights, pedestrians and other vehicles on the road.

### **What are the risks?**

#### **Inattention blindness**

Researchers have found that switching mental resources from driving to cellphone conversations can lead to "inattention blindness," where drivers fail to "see" or process information from objects on the roadway even when they are looking directly at them.

#### **Slower response time**

Since the brain is switching between complex tasks, the driver is less likely to respond to unexpected hazards such as pedestrians or other vehicles on the road.

