

Tip Sheet #1 - Distractions and Solutions for Drivers



When you are behind the wheel, driving is your only job. Here is a list of distractions that *all* drivers need to manage, and steps you can take to manage them.

Texting

- Before you get underway, turn your smartphone off.
- If texting while driving is too much of a temptation, put your device in the trunk.
- If you know you will have to send or respond to a text during the journey, schedule time during the trip to pull over, do your texting, put the device away and return to driving.

Talking on a mobile phone

- On the road, the smartest phone is off.
- Place your phone securely in its cradle, or the glove box.
- Set it so that any incoming calls go directly to voice mail.
- Record a phone message telling callers that you are busy driving and can't take a call. Ask them to leave a message and that you will call them back once you can safely pull over.
- Although hands-free devices are permitted under law, know that "hands-free" does not mean "distraction free." Hands-free devices are no safer than handheld devices.

Using a navigation system

It's not the device that is safe or dangerous; it's how you decide to use it. If you program the navigation system while driving, you are breaking the law and engaging in a potentially costly distraction.

- Program your route before you set out for the trip.
- Ensure the device is securely mounted and is in a readily visible location but does not obstruct or reduce your view of the area around your vehicle, including rear view mirrors.
- If the device needs to be re-programmed during the trip, pull over where it safe to do so.

Adjusting the radio, infotainment system or searching for music on your smartphone

- Only use simple controls, like station presets or volume controls when driving.
- Avoid using speech recognition features often found in newer vehicles.
- According to BC laws, a person may not have a video image displayed within view of the driver.
- Pre-program your playlist before getting underway. If you need to select a new playlist, find a safe place and pull over.

Eating and drinking

- Eat your breakfast or have a snack before you set out for the drive.
- If that doesn't hold you until your destination, plan to stop for a snack break every two hours.
- If you need a sip of water or coffee, some situations and locations are better than others. For example, intersections, school zones, construction zones and merge lanes are not good choices.

Talking to passengers

- A casual conversation can have its place in locations and at times when driving risks are low. A heated debate with a passenger occupies too much of your driving attention
- Your passengers are counting on you to keep them safe. Involve them in the journey — get them to watch the traffic, and pause the conversation at critical driving moments.
- If you have a passenger, have them conduct any necessary phone calls. Rely on them to be your navigator and provide timely directions. Let them control music selection.

Reading, including using maps or printed directions

- Reading a map, directions, book or newspaper takes as much visual, cognitive and manual concentration as texting. If you need to read, safely pull over and park the vehicle.
- Figure out where you are headed before setting out. Take note of key streets and intersections. Rehearse the directions. If you lose track, pull over and check.

Pets

- Safely secure pets when driving in a cage or with a harness.
- If you are driving for work, regulations require that animals must not be carried in the operator's cab or passenger compartment of a vehicle transporting workers unless appropriate facilities are provided for this purpose.

Daydreaming and personal grooming

- If the transmission is in "drive" so is the requirement to pay attention. Remember to use the time spent at stop lights to scan the road environment.
- Daydreaming can also be a sign you are fatigued and losing your ability to focus. If that's the case, safely pull over and take a break to get some fresh air. If necessary, take a brief nap or rest before resuming your trip.
- If you need to look your best, take care of your grooming needs before you get in the vehicle.

For more information

- [ICBC](#)
- [RoadSafetyAtWork.ca](#)
- [WorkSafeBC](#)
- [RoadSafetyBC](#)
- [BC Laws](#)