



Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's Crime Prevention Tips

The MCPA strives to bring current information regarding prevention topics to its members. Please use these prevention tips to promote safety to the citizens of your community. These tips are great for brochures, newsletters, e-mails, etc.

Topic: **Distracted Driving**

“JUST DRIVE”

Distracted driving has almost become a buzz-word recently, but rarely do we take the time to think about what distracted driving really is. Is distracted driving using a cell phone? Is distracted driving turning our heads to talk to people (including children) in the back seat? Is distracted driving thinking about what to eat for dinner on our drive home from work? The answers are yes, yes, and yes again. Distracted driving is anything that takes us away from the mental and physical requirements of safely operating a motor vehicle. Next, you may be thinking; so what? What is the big deal if I make a phone call while driving, dream about what I'm going to do on Saturday or make sure my kids have Cheerios so they don't scream all the way home?

We care about distracted driving because it causes motor vehicle crashes. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of people ages 1 – 33 in this country. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of injuries in the workplace and account for 1.7 billion dollars in costs to taxpayers in the State of Minnesota in 2002. In all driver age groups, distracted driving/driver inattention is sited most often in multiple-vehicle crashes. In single-vehicle crashes, distracted driving/driver inattention is the second most common contributing factor to the crash.

In 1991, Minnesota became one of only two states that kept track of the use of cell phones in traffic crashes. On our crash report form, an officer at the scene can record none to three different "contributing factors" for each vehicle involved in a crash. One of those contributing factors is: "Driver on CB Radio/Cellular Phone." Thus, cell phone use cannot be broken out specifically. In any case, the CB/Cell Phone contributing factor was reported in 1991 in about 100 crashes, resulting in 36 injuries, and 1 death. In 2002, the CG/Cell Phone contributing factor was reported in 223 crashes, resulting in 104 injuries, and 1 death. There are about 100,000 crashes in Minnesota per year. We do know that CB/Cell Phone factor is underreported. There is no doubt that a driver using a cell phone at the time of a crash is not very likely to admit that to a police officer. Instead, that person is likely to state that he/she was 'not paying attention', which has become the catch all, or default, contributing factor.

What this means for drivers is that we must make driving our number one priority when we are behind the wheel. If we need to make a phone call or take care of our children we must get off the road. It's really that easy. JUST DRIVE.