



USACE Safety Gram



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Distractions: They're Everywhere

Many of today's workplaces and households rely heavily on mobile phones for quick and convenient communication. It seems that we want instantaneous contact. You hear it every day, "There's no way we can do business without mobile phones." Chances are there is a mobile phone in your life, used for communicating with the office while you are working in the field or with your children when they arrive home before you in the afternoon.

As good as mobile phones might be for instant communication, they contribute to bad driving. It is becoming increasingly clear that talking on a mobile phone distracts a driver from seeing hazards and responding quickly.



Here are some typical distractions behind the wheel. Do any of them sound familiar?

- ◆ Mobile phone use
- ◆ Reading or sending text messages
- ◆ Trying to find a radio station or selecting music on your smart phone
- ◆ Reaching for a moving object inside the vehicle
- ◆ Trying to eat or drink while making sure nothing spills on you clothing
- ◆ Looking at an object or event outside of the vehicle
- ◆ Reading a newspaper, map, or document
- ◆ Applying makeup
- ◆ Focusing on the GPS or other electronic gadget instead of the road

Here are some reminders for driving safely without distractions:

- ◆ Make sure you, and the workers you supervise, use mobile phones safely. The safest thing is to make your calls before you set out. If you receive a mobile phone call while you are driving, let the caller leave a message, pull over, and call that person back. Reinforce this safety policy by issuing regular reminders and by setting a good example.
- ◆ Be aware that using a hands-free, voice-activated mobile phone also increases driver impairment. Hands free devices increase driver impairment as much as having a couple of drinks of alcohol.
- ◆ Never read or send text messages while driving.
- ◆ Always buckle up.
- ◆ Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- ◆ Program your GPS and familiarize yourself with the route before you start driving
- ◆ A safe driver also stops before checking maps and addresses, looking at paperwork, and dealing with similar distractions.
- ◆ Avoid eating or drinking in the car. Stop and take a break when you want to eat or drink. The break will also help to make you more alert.
- ◆ Avoid stressful conversations with passengers that can divert the driver's attention from the road.

Don't let yourself get distracted while driving. Keep your mind on your driving; keep your eyes on the road, and your hands on the wheel! Your life and the life of other drivers around you may just depend on it.

