

MAINTENANCE



Distracted Driving

Today there are limitless distractions available for us to indulge ourselves in as we drive. Way back in 1948 the first food drive thru was opened by In-N-Out Burger allowing us to pick up our food with out leaving our cars. What did we do with that food? I can't say from my own experience what happened that long ago, but those of you I have talked with said it was much like today; one hand on a burger, one hand on the wheel, and a distraction to our driving.

After the drive through came the 8 track tapes, then cassettes and compact discs, I can remember digging through consoles, glove boxes, and the passenger floor for the best of Van Halen or some other hot hit of the time. As if that weren't enough, do you remember the first modern in-car cell phones? Introduced in the early eighties, they were big and bulky and bolted to the floor.

While most had a hands free feature they still had to be dialed and required a two way concentration between the road and the person on the other end. This brought us to a new level of distractions that was soon followed by the age of the mobile device. Those big car phones were soon put into bags and were about the size of a large phone book. The bags made them mobile and soon they were perched on dashboards, floor



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humps, and sliding around on seats.

With the demand of phones increasing they got smaller, now you had to dig into your pocket or search the front seat for a ringing cell phone all while moving through traffic. And then it happened, one day not too long ago someone got the first text message.

Text messaging; the mother of all driving distractions. Look around the next time you drive through town at all of the people on the phone.

I was inspired to write this article while riding with a friend and almost being hit by a driver distracted by texting. No this was not a teenager but rather a middle aged person who had many years of driving experience that should know the hazards of distracted driving. I went on to count the people using their phones while driving. In four miles I counted fifteen people on phones, eight of them looking down

and texting. For those of you not familiar with the term, text messaging means sending typed messages back and forth over a cell phone, so if you're driving you have to type with one or both hands, steer, often with a knee, and take your eyes off the road for several seconds. Does this sound dangerous? It is, and has led to what we term in the auto recycling world as the text crash.

Often, when a driver is texting they look up just before they hit the car in front of them. This gives them just enough time to hit the brake and the front end of the vehicle dives down quickly so the front end ends up impacted above the bumper often with no damage to the lower half.

Studies suggest that drivers who send or receive a text message tend to take their eyes off the road for about five seconds, enough time for a vehicle

going at highway speed to travel more than 100 yards, the length of a football field.

Vehicles are now being equipped with built-in cell phones, gps systems, and even in car internet and web radio.

Next month I will detail some of the new and coming technology and the things the manufactures are doing to help drivers keep their eyes on the road.

The next time you drive, see if you are distracted by something. The life you save could be your own.

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