

## Frequently Asked Questions



State of Illinois  
Illinois State Police



### Everyone does it...

A recent AAA study found almost everyone reaches for something, adjusts a control, or gets distracted at some point while driving, which is one of the reasons distracted driving is such a big problem. Driver inattention is a factor in more than 1.6 million crashes in North America annually, resulting in serious injuries, deaths, and an economic impact that some experts say reaches nearly \$40 billion per year.



#### ***Q. Does cell phone use while driving cause traffic crashes?***

- A. Research shows that driving while using a cell phone can pose a serious cognitive distraction and degrade driver performance. The use of a cell phone while driving increases your chance of getting into a crash by 400%. Texting while driving makes you 23 times more likely to crash.

#### ***Q. Is it legal to use a hand-held cell phone device behind the wheel?***

- A. The law permits the use of a cell phone only when using a bluetooth headset, earpiece, or voice activated commands.

#### ***Q. Is talking on a cell phone any worse than having a conversation with someone in the car?***

- A. Any activity a driver engages in while driving has the potential to distract him/her from the primary task of driving. Some research findings comparing cell phone use to passenger conversations while driving show each to be equally risky, while others show cell phone use to be more risky. A significant difference between the two is the fact that a passenger can monitor the driving situation along with the driver and pause for, or alert the driver to, potential hazards.

For more information, or to request a safety presentation, you may send an email to the  
ISP Safety Education Unit at:

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## Distracted Driving

*What is a Text Worth?*



Illinois State Police

Illinois law prohibits the use of handheld cellphones, texting or using other electronic communications while operating a motor vehicle. Hands-free devices or Bluetooth technology is allowed for persons age 19 and older.

Illinois law also prohibits the use of headsets while driving. Headsets are defined as any device, other than a hearing aid, that allows a person to hear or receive electronic communications. The use of a single-sided headset or earpiece with a wireless/cellphone device is permitted while driving. Motorcycle, motor-driven cycle and moped operators may use intercom helmets that permit a driver and/or passengers to speak to one another.

Using hands-free technology such as a headset or voice activated controls is considered a distraction while driving and can be dangerous. If a driver must make a phone call, even with hands-free technology, it is recommended the driver pull off to the side of the road before making the call.

Using a cellphone while holding the device and utilizing the speaker phone is not considered hands free and is a violation of Illinois law.

The only time an Illinois driver can use a cellphone that is not hands free is:

- **To report an emergency situation.**
- **While parked on the shoulder of a roadway.**
- **While stopped due to normal traffic being obstructed and the vehicle is in neutral or park.**

A driver who is in a crash resulting from distracted driving may face criminal penalties and incarceration.

## WHEN DRIVING DO YOU...

- **Shave**
- **Text or email**
- **Read or write**
- **Tune the radio**
- **Put on makeup**
- **Eat, drink, or smoke**
- **Talk on the cell phone**
- **Comb or brush your hair**
- **File, clip, or polish your nails**
- **Argue with another passenger**
- **Reach for the glove compartment**
- **Break up fights between your kids**
- **Put in contact lenses or use eye drops**
- **Pick something up from the floor or between the seats**

## IF SO, YOU ARE DRIVING DISTRACTED

### Don't multi-task when driving.

Driving is complicated enough without becoming distracted by doing other things too. Don't use the vehicle's mirrors for personal grooming when the vehicle is in motion or try to read or write while you're behind the wheel.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) records show nearly 6,000 people died last year in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver, and more than half a million were injured.

### Don't touch that dial.

Adjust seat positions, climate controls, sound systems, and other devices before you leave or while the vehicle is stopped. Know how your controls work so if you must adjust something on the go, you'll be less distracted. Use presets for radio and climate control, or have your passenger assist you.

## How to Avoid Being Distracted

- **Limit interaction with passengers**
  - **Avoid talking while driving**
- **Avoid taking your eyes off the road**
  - **Keep both hands on the wheel**

**Practice good habits by turning your phone off before you drive so you won't be tempted to answer calls on the road.**