Spot The Safety Violation: Cell Phones Aren’t the Only Distractions for Drivers



How many distractions are preventing this woman from driving safely’

Research’and tragic incidents’have shown the dangers of distracted driving. Using cellphones isn’t the only activity or thing that can distract drivers. In fact, the top distractions according to the Canadian Automobile Association and American Automobile Association are:

- Outside object/person/event ‘ 29.9%
- Adjusting the radio/CD ‘ 11.4%
- Other vehicle occupants ‘ 10.9%
- Something moving in the car ‘ 4.3%
- Using another object/device ‘ 2.9%
- Adjusting car’s climate controls ‘ 2.8%
- Eating/drinking ‘ 1.7%
- Cellular phones ‘ 1.5%.

The woman in this picture is doing several unsafe things while behind the wheel. First, she shouldn’t be talking on her cell phone while operating a motor vehicle, which is illegal across Canada. (In fact, simply holding a cell phone while driving may be illegal.)

Second, she shouldn't be applying makeup at the same time. By doing so, she's looking into a mirror instead of at the road ahead. Putting on mascara also means she has only one hand on the wheel, which will impact her ability to respond properly if, say, the car in front of her should suddenly stop. (Plus, she's also at risk of injuring her eye should that happen.) According to the CAA, drivers applying makeup are **3 times more likely** than non-distracted drivers to be in a crash or near crash event.

Lastly, her control of the car is further compromised by the fact she's holding a cup of coffee in her only 'free' hand.

DISTRACTED DRIVING STATISTICS

If you think the dangers of distracted driving are exaggerated, consider these disturbing statistics:

- Drivers engaged in texting are **23 times more likely** to be involved in a crash or near crash event compared with non-distracted drivers (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 2010)
- Distracted drivers are **3 times more likely** to be in a crash than attentive drivers (Alberta Transportation, 2011)
- Driver distraction is a factor in about **4 million** motor vehicle crashes in North America each year
- Economic losses caused by traffic collision-related healthcare costs and lost productivity are at least **$10 billion** annually, which is about 1% of Canada's GDP (Government of Canada)
- In 2010, distracted driving was a contributing factor in **104 collision fatalities** in BC (RCMP)
- International research shows that **20-30%** of all collisions involve driver distraction (Alberta Transportation, 2011)

And according to a recent story by the CBC, despite crackdowns

on distracted driving by the police, it remains a problem across Canada.

DISTRACTED DRIVING & THE WORKPLACE

Distracted driving is a safety concern for employers whose workers drive on the job because you don't want your employees injured or killed in car accidents caused by distracted drivers. In addition, employers can be held liable for distracted driving accidents caused by their employees.

So how is an employer supposed to prevent workers from driving while distracted on the job'

The OHS Insider's Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices Compliance Centre contains articles, tools, videos and other resources to help employers keep their workers safe on the road and when operating any motor vehicle or motorized equipment, including: