



Distracted Driving Global Fact Sheet

- According to the World Health Organization more than 1.2 million people die in road crashes worldwide each year – the equivalent of one traffic-related fatality every 30 seconds – and another 20 to 50 million people are injured.¹
- The WHO reports that in 2004 road traffic injuries were the leading cause of death for all 15-to-29-year-olds.²
- By 2030, road traffic injuries are projected to be the fifth leading cause of death worldwide, surpassing HIV/AIDS, all forms of cancer, violence, and diabetes.³
- The vast majority of global traffic fatalities – 91 percent – occur in low-income and middle-income countries, while they are home to only 48 percent of the world’s vehicles.⁴
- Driver behavior is responsible for 80 to 90 percent of these road crashes, meaning that preventable behaviors contribute more to fatalities and injuries than road conditions or vehicle defects.⁵
- One of the most dangerous driver behaviors is the spreading epidemic of distracted driving, which has increased with the proliferation of cell phones and increasing mobilization of people across the globe.
- Today, there are more than 600 million passenger cars⁶ and 4.6 billion cell phone subscriptions worldwide⁷ – with 2 billion of those subscriptions sold in 2009 alone.⁸
- Distracted drivers are about 4 times as likely to be involved in crashes as those who are focused on driving.⁹ Drivers who are texting can be more than 20 times more likely to crash than non-distracted drivers.¹⁰
- Drivers who send and receive text messages take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds out of every 6 seconds while texting. At 55 miles per hour, this means that the driver is traveling the length of a football field, including the end zones, without looking at the road.¹¹
- In 2008, nearly 6,000 people in the United States were killed and more than 500,000 were injured in crashes involving distracted driving.¹²
- Countries around the world are taking action to stop distracted driving. To date, at least 32 countries have enacted laws banning cell phone use while driving and Portugal has made using any kind of phone, including hands-free, illegal while driving.
- Some countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium, Spain, New Zealand, Australia, and Russia, have also launched public education and awareness campaigns urging people to put away their cell phones behind the wheel.

¹⁻⁴ WHO (2009). *Global Status Report on Road Safety Time for Action*. Geneva, Switzerland: The World Health Organization.

⁵ IFRCRCS (2007). *Practical Guide on Road Safety: A Toolkit for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. <http://www.grsproadsafety.org/themes/default/pdfs/GRSP-Red%20Cross%20Toolkit.pdf>

⁶ Worldmapper (n/a). “Passenger Cars.” South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan). <http://www.sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/worldmapper/display.php?selected=31>

⁷ The Associated Press (2010, February 15). “Number of Cell Phones Worldwide Hits 4.6B.” Retrieved from CBS News portal at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/02/15/business/main6209772.shtml>

⁸ Fact Sheet: A Global Look at Distracted Driving, 1/29/10

⁹ Klauer, S.G., Dingus, T. A., Neale, V. L., Sudweeks, J.D., and Ramsey, D.J. (2006, April). *The Impact of Driver Inattention on Near Crash/Crash Risk: An Analysis Using the 100-Car Study Data*. DOT HS 810 594. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

¹⁰ Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (2009, July 27). “New Data from VTTI Provides Insight into Cell Phone Use and Driving Distraction.” Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. Available at http://www.vtti.vt.edu/PDF/7-22-09-VTTI-Press_Release_Cell_phones_and_Driver_Distraction.pdf

¹¹ Olson, R.L., Hanowski, R.J., Hickman, J.S., & Bocanegra, J. (2009, September). *Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations*. FMCSA RRR 09 042. Washington, DC: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

¹² NHTSA. (2009, September). “An Examination of Driver Distraction as Recorded in NHTSA Databases.” Traffic Safety Facts. Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.