



## Traffic Safety

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### ◆ Cell Phone Safety

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#### Drive Safer, Talk Later The AAA Guide to Cell Phones and Driving

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Distracted driving - including the use of cell phones - is a major contributor to automobile crashes. Between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes related to distracted driving occur daily in the United States. In a year, they contribute to as many as one-half of the 6 million U.S. crashes reported annually.

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#### **Distraction = More Than Hands and Eyes**

Driver distractions are nothing new. They've been a topic of discussion since windshield wipers were introduced in cars during the early 1900s.

Obviously, drivers are distracted when they take their hands off the wheel or their eyes off the road. Equally troubling, they're also distracted when they take their minds off driving - when they're thinking about things other than the road in front of them and the vehicles around them. Drivers can be distracted talking on the phone or eating a sandwich in the car.

#### **How do hand-held cell phones factor into the equation?**

Using a cellular phone while driving can increase your chances of being involved in a crash. However, cell phones aren't the only problem. Other distractions, such as looking at outside objects and other people in the vehicle, pose a greater risk of contributing to crashes than cell phone use.

Why are handheld cell phones at the heart of the debate?

Handheld cell phones are readily visible to other drivers. When people chance upon a distracted driver and notice a cell phone, they naturally blame the phone. Most drivers are frustrated when they see inconsiderate, inattentive drivers talking on cell phones.

However, it's more difficult to determine if a distracted driver is talking to a passenger, tuning the radio or eating.

#### **What about hands-free phones?**

Hands-free phones are not risk-free. The hands-free feature is simply a convenience: It does not increase safety.

Studies show that hands-free cellular phones distract drivers the same as handheld phones. Why? Because it's the conversation that distracts the driver - not the device.

#### **What do recent studies show?**

Studies show that intellectual activities distract drivers. Such activities impair their ability to drive safely and retain control of the vehicle.