

Distracted Driving



AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT

"Keeping you, your family and the community safe."

Research has shown that driver distraction and driving inattention may be involved in as high as 78% of passenger vehicle crashes

(US DOT Publication FMCSA-RRR-09-042).



Distracted Driving Factors:

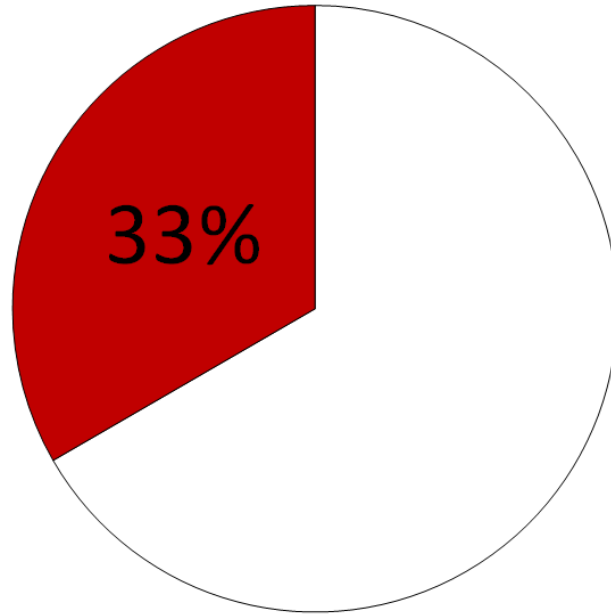
- Texting
- Using a cell phone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading (e.g., maps)
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio



Although distracted driving is not listed as a significant source of fatalities in Austin's 2012 data, that does not mean it is not happening. It only means that this particular cause was not cited as a contributing factor. Distracted driving is a challenging factor to assess given the lack of physical evidence after a crash. For this report, an indirect measure for distracted driving is estimated by the frequency that reckless driving and driver fault (e.g., not paying attention) were listed as factors. Given this estimation approach, 33% (26 of 78) of Austin's 2012 fatalities resulted from distracted driving.



Text messaging increases your crash risk by 23 times.



Distracted Driving as a Contributing Factor in 2012 Fatalities

(US DOT Pub. FMCSA-RRR-09-042)



City of Austin Ordinance—Texting

12-1-34 ELECTRONIC MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING

- (A) A driver of a motor vehicle may not use a wireless communication device to **view, send, or compose an electronic message** or engage other application software while operating a motor vehicle.
- (B) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of an offense under this section if a wireless communications device is used:
 - (1) while the vehicle is stopped;
 - (2) strictly to engage in a telephone conversation, including dialing or deactivating the call;
 - (3) as a global positioning or navigation system that is affixed to the vehicle;
 - (4) for obtaining emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency, or serious traffic hazard, or to prevent a crime about to be committed;
 - (5) in the reasonable belief that a person's life or safety is in immediate danger;
 - (6) if the device is permanently installed inside the vehicle; or
 - (7) solely in a voice-activated or other hands-free mode.
- (C) This section does not apply to an operator of an authorized emergency vehicle using a wireless communication device while acting in an official capacity.
- (D) To the extent that this section conflicts with the Texas Transportation Code Section 545.424, regarding the use of wireless communication devices while operating a motor vehicle by minors, or Texas Transportation Code Section 545.425, regarding the use of wireless communication devices in school crossing zones, this section does not apply.

Source: Ord. 20091022-028; Ord. 20091217-090.



Enforcement Strategies

- School Zone Safety
 - Use of Phone & Texting While Driving
 - Includes **ALL** use of cell phones in school zones
 - Uniformed and Plainclothes officers used in these operations. (1 plainclothes observing violators, 1-2 uniformed making traffic stops and citing)
 - Peak times 7:00am-8:30am and 2:30pm-4:30pm
 - Officers also focused on other hazardous driving behavior (e.g. speeding, etc..)



Enforcement Strategies

- Texting While Driving
 - Uniformed/Plainclothes officers set up at specific locations observe drivers manipulating the screen/qwerty on their cell phone for a period of time beyond dialing a number and for a significant distance while the vehicle is in motion (½ block or more)
 - Specific Enforcement locations include:
 - Areas throughout the City of Austin identified as “Hotspot Crash Locations”
 - Areas with increased pedestrian and bicyclist activity.



Enforcement Objectives

Our objective was to make these observations:

1. While the vehicle is in motion, the driver is looking at and manipulating the qwerty or touch screen of a cell phone that they are holding or directly touching
2. In a manner consistent with texting, selecting, entering, typing
3. For a period of time beyond what a reasonable person would believe was merely to dial a number, and also based on the officer's belief through years of experience as a cell phone user of various models of cell phones



Goals of Enforcement

- Decrease the number of fatal and serious injury crashes contributed to distracted driving
- Change the up-trending culture of distracted driving through consistent and aggressive enforcement and education

