



## **Distracted Driving: Avoiding Our Old-Fashioned Bad Habits**

by [John Demas](#) on 12/08/09 at 3:40 pm

With the media currently paying so much attention to driving while texting or talking on our cell phones while behind the wheel, it's far too easy for many of us to accidentally fall back into some of our former distracted driving habits. We may forget that many activities that prevent us from carefully watching the road can make us up to four times more likely to be in an accident.

Just think back on all of your driving destinations during the past 30 days, recalling the time of day you made each journey and who was riding with you. Now honestly ask yourself, how many times did you lapse back into one or more of the following behaviors (each of which can be just as dangerous as texting while driving or talking on your cell phone):

- Eating part or all of a meal; drinking a beverage and then briefly looking off to the side to be sure you've placed it back in the console so it won't tip over;
- Completing a quick shave (or applying facial make-up) while thinking the traffic in front of you remained at a standstill;
- Turning around and looking over your shoulder while disciplining an unruly child (instead of looking for a safe place to stop to handle this task);
- Reaching across the seat and below it, searching through the glove compartment and console, determined to locate your favorite music or motivational CD;
- Straining to see the GPS screen because you left your reading glasses at home;
- Reading the newspaper or a paperback book on your Kindle or other reading device;
- Using your "netbook" (laptop - or other similar device) to check your email, surf the Internet or put a few finishing touches on a job presentation or a paper due in school;
- Emptying out your overcoat, suit or slack pockets, desperately searching for coins for the upcoming toll booth (something you could have handled ahead of time);
- Reviewing a handheld map with such intensity that you don't even notice the cars next to you moving forward or hear the cars behind you honking for a moment or two;

- Entering data into a device used for deliveries while driving, instead of handling that task while safely parked.

As you can see, most of us have been guilty of frequently engaging in one or more of these activities while driving, putting ourselves and others at great risk. Just remember, as a simple rule of thumb: Don't do anything behind the wheel that forces you to take your eyes off the road for even a brief second. It's during such brief moments that some of the worst accidents occur, maiming people for life or even taking one or more innocent lives.