



# Tactical Responses

The Next Level In Driver

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## Driving While Distracted

By Gary G. Miller

*Editors Note: Due to the importance of this subject matter we are devoting our entire issue to it. We will address Antilock Braking Systems in a future issue.*

### Driving While Distracted

By Gary G. Miller



We have all seen it, and even worse, we have all done it, and worse yet, we continue to do it. Distractive driving/inattentive driving is becoming increasingly prevalent and dangerous. As more drivers share more distractions, there will be more crashes, more

injuries and deaths, and more excuses. Employers are in a position to arrest this disturbing trend and reduce their own liability in the process. With an awareness of current research, employers will be in a better position to manage risk, establish reasonable policies, and reduce the potential of facing vicarious liability claims. With an understanding of the causes and consequences of distracted driving, individual drivers will be more likely to adhere to company vehicle use policies both on and off the job.

Distractions have always been a part of driving whether it be an external distraction such as a person waving a business banner or internal distraction such as a crying child. Although we cannot eliminate



distractions we do have the ability to manage them. Many people think of cell phone usage as the primary internal distraction, but ac-



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***The National Safety Council is calling for an all out ban on any type of cell phone usage while driving!***

## Driving While Distracted (continued)

According to most studies it is a little further down on the list. The number one most engaged distracted driving past-time is talking to your passenger (15%). Whether it is a calm discussion or a heated debate we all do it. Depending on the study, the next is some type of grooming (6.5%) (shaving, applying makeup, etc), followed by cell phone usage and CD players at 5.3%, and eating or drinking at 1.9%. Again these percentages vary depending on the specific study, but all apply at one time or another.



One study actually attributes a loss of perception/reaction time of 130 milliseconds or .13 seconds from cell phone usage. The Tactical Response Academy (TRA) has found from our independent testing that would be nearly equivalent to the amount of time lost by not covering your brake pedal when expecting a hazard (about 1/5<sup>th</sup> of a second is lost). At 55mph this would add about 16 feet to a vehicles total stopping distance. Easily enough distance to avoid a collision. Some studies measure eye glances and times and develop a correlation to cell phone and other types of distractions.

The National Safety Council is calling for an all out ban on any type of cell phone usage while driving. In a New York Times article dated January 12, 2009 the author opined "the problem is not your hands, but your brain." This is supported by many scientific studies.



A 2001 study of national crash data indicates that distracted driving is responsible for about 8.3% of all crashes. Most studies today agree that about 10% of all crashes are likely caused by driving while being distracted. Crash data has a tendency to be underreported as often times investigators cannot tell when a crash is distracted related, nor do drivers freely admit to this



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***From 2005-2007  
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## Driving While Distracted (continued)

type of driving behavior.

A Washington DC, naturalistic study of 69 crashes and 761 near crashes showed that 33% of the crashes and 27% of the near crashes were caused by distracted driving.

In one of the most reliable studies, the phone records of 55 drivers involved in injury crashes were reviewed. This Perth, Australia study revealed a four-fold increase in the risk of serious crash involvement among drivers using the cell phone at the time of collision.

In 2007 the state of Oregon reported 1,560 of the 43,653 crashes were caused from inattentive driving. This represented about 3.5 percent of all crashes. Five of these crashes resulted in fatalities. Cell phone usage was a contributing factor in 313 of these collisions, up from 292 in 2006. These numbers do not even include the 1,150 crashes attributed to “careless driving” which may or may not be tied to inattentive driving. From 2005-2007 there were actually 12 fatalities reportedly caused by cell phone usage in Oregon.

Distracted driving is much more than just cell phone usage. Whether it be inserting a CD, eating a hamburger, a quick call to mom, a long call to friends to help the time go by, a glance at an incoming text, a quick shave, putting on mascara, reading a map or a book, playing with the dog, reaching in the back-seat towards your child, drinking a cup of coffee, and a host of other distractions they all increase crash risk. It is important that all drivers become educated to these facts.



(continued on page 7)



# DriveABLE™

Driver Risk Management Solutions

DriveABLE™  
Operator  
CheckUp  
System

## DriveABLE™ Operator Checkup System

- Proven Science

Deciding on driving abilities is far too important to be left to guesswork; DriveABLE™ gives you an objective, defensible answer, based on scientifically validated assessment procedures.

- Flexibility

We can offer our in-office assessment in one of our existing centres across Oregon, or provide an onsite service at any of your locations.

- Turnkey Solution

We can deliver training as required, manage your drivers' records and provide you with any customized, detailed reports that you may need.

- Integration

We can work with you to help improve your operational safety and integrate our reports in your current OHS documentation for you to reach your safety audit performance targets.

Trusted by:



### Screenshots



For more information, visit our website or contact us today !

Email: [william.mary@drivereducationcenter.com](mailto:william.mary@drivereducationcenter.com)

## DriveABLE™

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[www.drivereducationcenter.com/at\\_risk.html](http://www.drivereducationcenter.com/at_risk.html)



# DriveABLE™

Driver Risk Management Solutions

## DriveABLE™ Operator Checkup System

### DriveABLE™ Operator Checkup System

The DriveABLE™ Operator Checkup System (DokS™) can help you make sure your drivers are fit to drive from a medical point of view.

Our assessment is objective, easy to administer, was developed through award-winning research, and is used to assess professional drivers throughout Oregon.

#### *Driving can be challenging... Driving safely even more...*

- Many medical conditions and / or medications can affect the safe operation of a motor vehicle.
- Your drivers care about road safety, as much as you do.
- Using our assessment will help you determine if medical conditions and/or medications are putting your drivers at risk and to what extent.
- Our assessment procedures can help you be even more proactive in managing the safety of your operations.

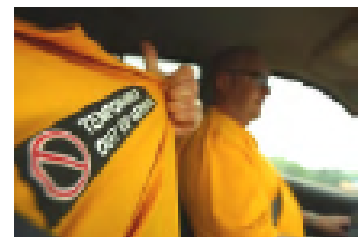
#### *Mitigate risks associated with your drivers' health*

##### Process Overview



#### **BENEFITS FOR FLEETS**

- Get a baseline assessment for your drivers
- Monitor their fitness-to-drive over time
- Complement your Safety Management Programs
- Improve the accountability of your organization
- Receive discounts on insurance and worker's compensation premiums
- Make sure operators are safe to return to the road after injuries



Contact us today to see how we can tailor our program to meet your organization's needs



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## Online Driver Training Programs

The Tactical Response Academy is pleased to offer online defensive driver training programs. This training is available at a nominal fee via our website at [www.tacticalresponseacademy.com](http://www.tacticalresponseacademy.com) or by calling us at 503-588-8076. This is great for those drivers who can't make it to the classroom sessions or just want a refresher.

**The two-hours of training consists of four modules broken down as follows:**

Introduction/Knowing Your Vehicle (40 minutes) - This module covers really getting to know your vehicle. Not just jumping in a car and driving off.

Safe Operating Practices (20 minutes) - This module covers the latest in defensive driving techniques and information.

When Things Go Wrong (30 minutes) - What should you do when defensive driving fails. What are your choices of evasive action and successful techniques to steer you out of trouble.

The Technical Aspects of Driving (30 minutes) —This module covers topics such as how fast are you really going? Explains how the driver can quickly calculate speed from miles per hour (MPH) to feet per second (fps). Once this is mastered then you can calculate following distance.

## Winter Driving Special

Do you have a new driver in the household? Are you a little leary of driving in adverse weather? Why wait until the snow and ice are here when it may be too late. Get refreshed on winter driving skills now with our expert instructors and state-of-the-art driving simulator.

Sign-up for our 2-hour class and 1-hour driving simulator session that focuses on Winter Driving.

Save 10% if you register by September 1 for our October classes.

Go to [www.tacticalresponseacademy.com](http://www.tacticalresponseacademy.com) for more information and registration.



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## Driving While Distracted (continued)

Laws to counter distracted driving seem to have little result other than having a short-term effect (the state of New York being the most documented example). States are cracking down on handheld cell-phone usage, but indicating hands-free usage is acceptable, when most studies do not support that. Distracted driving needs to be a head-liner in government and private defensive driving programs. Emphasis can be placed on cell phone usage, but all other distractions must be addressed as equally, if not more importantly. The emphasis on youth and cell phone usage is perhaps even more critical. They are the most inexperienced of all drivers and have a greater tendency to use the phone for multiple applications other than talking. The risks will continue to climb as technology improves. Even better engineered technology such as in video information systems (IVIS), have a downfall in that they allow for simpler access and easier use, therefore encouraging greater usage, leading to increased distraction time.



Although more scientific and objective studies are needed, at this point and time there seems to be growing national and international support for the following statements:

- ◆ Moderate distractions such as inserting a CD, eating, or talking and/or listening to a hand-held device doubles your crash risk.
- ◆ Complex distractions such as reaching for a moving object or hand-held device and dialing a hand-held device triples your crash risk.
- ◆ Hospital/Crash Record studies indicate there is a four times greater chance of crash risk when using a cell phone.
- ◆ The use of a hand-held cell phone or a hands-free cell phone may make little difference in crash risk.
- ◆ National Crash Data indicates that at a minimum 10 percent of all crashes are a result of inattentive driving.
- ◆ Younger (thus more inexperienced) drivers are using cell-



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## Driving While Distracted (continued)

phones for many other tasks than just talking (texting, video downloads, etc) and so an exponential increase in crash risk is expected in the future.

- ◆ Most employers do not have programs in place that specifically target distractive driving.

In Oregon state lawmakers have given final approval to House Bill 2377, a bill outlawing the use of hand-held cell phones while operating a motor vehicle, making Oregon the sixth state to do so. Governor Ted Kulongoski has signed the bill and it will become law January 1, 2010.

There are many exempt occupations to this bill. Most of which make little to no sense such as public safety employees and agricultural drivers. If anything, public safety personnel should be the last to have an exemption from the hand-held ban. They are already distracted enough with handheld radios, mobile computer terminals, and emergency response. So employers watch out! Don't be lulled into a false sense of security thinking that hands-free phone operation will be a safe method of communication for your employees simply because a law was passed allowing it. Most likely it will not. Examine your policies on driving and cell phone usage, on driving and eating, on driving and being distracted. If you have not, start a distracted driving training program. If you have, congratulations you are way ahead of most others.



The Tactical Response Academy uses a combination of classroom and simulator-based instruction, closed course performance, and open road assessment to assist in reducing risk from crashes not only caused by distractive and inattentive driving, but all driving. TRA teaches the facts of proper driving technique followed by hands-on applications to affect their attitudes and behaviors as observed in our mobile driving simulator (pictured here).



**Reminder..**  
*Early fall is a great time to change your wiper blades. The hot summer dries them out and makes them less effective.*





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## Future Training Dates

TRA continues to provide on and off site driver training. Driver training using classrooms and the simulator will be situated at the Chemeketa Regional Training Center in Brooks, Oregon for the winter months. If you are interested in setting up future training dates please contact us.

A special thank you to our newest clients:

- Trackers Northwest
- United States Coast Guard
- Douglas County Fire District #2
- The Klamath Tribes
- Blue Mountain Community College

## Future Issues/Articles

Next Issue:  
ABS Braking Systems



Gary G. Miller, Editor

*We're on the web at*  
***www.tacticalresponseacademy.com***

Tactical Responses is a quarterly public service newsletter that is freely available either by including yourself on the TRA email newsletter list or by reviewing it on the website [www.tacticalresponseacademy.com](http://www.tacticalresponseacademy.com).

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