



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

We cover the topic of distracted driving every April because it is a real hazard that is so easily avoided, yet continues to cause accidents. According to the US Department of Transportation, 3,142 people were killed in 2020 because of distracted driving.

Some people believe that most vehicle crashes are caused by malfunctions such as faulty brakes, blown tires or engine problems, but this is far from the truth. Actually, 94% of crashes are caused by driver error. What is the leading cause of this driver error? Distractions. From cell phones to dashboard infotainment systems to evolving voice command features, all pose a threat to our safety. Just one second of your attention is all it takes to change a life forever.

MYTH: I know distracted driving is dangerous, but I can't afford to miss calls, emails or text messages. My job depends on it.

REALITY:
Vehicle crashes are the #1 cause of workplace deaths. By eliminating this deadly distraction, employers are keeping their workforce safer.



MYTH: My car came with an infotainment system. Since it's built into the car, it must be safe.

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REALITY: Technologies that allow drivers to make hands-free calls and use voice commands to dictate texts and emails, change music and update social media can be distracting – even if they are built into the vehicle. The problem is that our brains remain distracted. Drivers miss seeing up to 50% of what is around them like: other drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcycles, and red lights.



MYTH: I only use my phone at stoplights so it's okay.

REALITY: It is important to remain an attentive driver at all times. How many times have you seen vehicles rear-end another at stoplights? Or more common recently, drivers ease their foot pressure off the brake rolling into the vehicle in front of them because they were looking down texting or selecting different music.

BIGGEST MYTH: Drivers can multitask.

BIGGEST REALITY: The human brain CANNOT do two things at the same time – driving and any other task. Both take concentration, so the brain switches between the two tasks slowing reaction time.

JUST DRIVE!

Sources:

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>
<https://www.nsc.org/pages/ddam/ddam-materials>
<https://www.nsc.org/road-safety/get-involved/distracted-driving-awareness-month>