

PRESENTER'S GUIDE

"DISTRACTED DRIVING"

Part of the General Safety Series

OUTLINE OF MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS

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The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the program. The outline can be used to review the program before conducting a classroom session, as well as in preparing to lead a class discussion about the program.

- **We've all seen drivers on the road doing something other than paying attention to traffic when they're behind the wheel.**
 - What they're doing is called "distracted driving."
- **Distracted driving is not a new problem.**
 - The increasing use of cellphones and other gadgets has caused it to grow alarmingly in recent years.
 - So has its toll in accidents, injuries and lost lives.
- **Today, as many as one in three motor vehicle accidents involve distracted drivers.**
 - Fortunately, there are ways we can reverse this trend.
- **The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration defines distracted drivers as those who engage in "any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving."**
 - Let's be honest, plenty of us fit that description.
 - Distracted driving behaviors can seem like an inevitable part of our hectic, high-tech world, but the cost is just too high to continue them.
- **Distracted driving has been called an "epidemic" and "a new universe of risk."**
 - Nearly 70% of all drivers talk on their cell phone while driving, and more than 30% read or send text or email messages while behind the wheel.
 - One study found that talking on a cell phone quadruples the risk of being in an accident.
 - That number jumps to 23 times more risk when a driver is texting.
- **Distraction can take many other forms as well.**

- Eating a breakfast sandwich as you drive, or brushing your hair.
 - Even map-reading or getting too involved in a discussion with a passenger can pull you away from focusing on the road.
- **Each year thousands of people are killed and hundreds of thousands are injured in crashes that involve distracted drivers.**
 - Numbers like these have led many states to ban driver use of hand-held cell phones, and most states ban driver texting.
- **But distracted driving continues unabated, and so do the crashes, injuries and deaths it causes.**
 - Why? The answer highlights a frustrating fact about attitudes toward distracted driving.
- **Over 90% of drivers have said that they recognize the danger from cell phones and other distractions.**
 - Yet two thirds of the same people admitted to talking on a cell phone while driving.
 - And 35% said they read or sent text messages or email as well.
- **We can no longer write this behavior off as "human nature".**
 - Distracted driving kills people.
 - Its tragic cost demands that we take effective steps to stop it as soon, and as completely, as possible.
- **How can you tell if someone's a distracted driver? Look for drivers who are:**
 - Engrossed in a cell-phone conversation.
 - Texting.
 - Eating or drinking.
 - Brushing their hair.
 - Applying make-up.
 - Talking to passengers.
 - Looking at maps.
 - Adjusting dashboard controls.
- **You can also tell them by their driving.**

- They're the ones swerving and weaving through traffic, going too fast or too slow, and making sudden starts and stops.
 - These are the things that happen when a driver isn't focused on driving.
- **Distracted drivers are just plain trying to do too many things at once!**
 - Over the years this concept of "multi-tasking" has become very popular in the workplace, but it can be deadly on the road.
 - The problem is, studies have shown that we can't really multi-task at all, at least not the way most of us think of it.
 - Any multi-tasking ability we have is limited to doing two tasks at a time, and one of those tasks must be second nature to us, almost automatic.
- **When we think we're multi-tasking our brain is really just doing the best it can under pressure, switching its attention back and forth among different tasks and inputs.**
 - Multi-tasking not only doesn't save time, it actually degrades our performance by compromising attention, potentially increasing errors.
 - Since driving is one of the most complex activities we engage in, for drivers the only real result is... distraction!
- **Traffic safety experts organize distractions into three main types... visual, manual and cognitive.**
- **Visual distractions take your eyes off the road.**
 - This includes things such as reading an incoming text message,
 - Checking how the kids are doing in the back seat,
 - Verifying a GPS setting.

- **Manual distraction involves taking your hands off the wheel. This happens when you...**
 - Grab your cell phone to answer a call,
 - Key in a text message,
 - Pick up that burger you bought at the drive-through.
- **Cognitive distraction means taking your mind off your driving.**
 - Like when you're arguing with someone on your cell phone,
 - Your GPS tells you you're lost,
 - Or you're obsessing about an upcoming work project.
- **Other examples of distraction include:**
 - Looking at something unusual on the roadside, like a funny billboard.
 - Changing the radio station.
 - Worrying about the appointment you're running late for.
 - Turning around to grab something off the back seat.
 - Sorting through CD tracks to find a song you like.
 - Brushing your hair in the rear-view or visor mirror.
 - Reading a map or written directions.
 - Re-setting the dashboard clock.
- **Emotional reactions such as happiness, sadness and anger are forms of cognitive distraction, too.**
- **Any of these types of distractions, whether alone or in combination, creates a dangerous situation!**
- **Another source of serious distraction is other people!**
 - A back-seat driver might question your navigation, suggest that you reprogram the GPS, or tell you to look out for a turn.
 - Kids can force you to turn around to see what they're up to and perhaps help them with something.
 - Even when your kids are quietly amusing themselves, you're always thinking about them.

- **People don't even have to be passengers to distract you.**
 - They can demand your attention simply by calling you on your cell phone, or sending a text.
 - Other drivers can distract you by honking their horns.
 - Pedestrians can distract you by trying to cross the street.

- **Distracted drivers can have trouble taking these interruptions seriously.**
 - "After all," they ask, "how dangerous can a relatively short distraction really be?"
 - There are really two answers to that question. Let's look at the most common example, using a cell phone while driving.

- **High-tech widgets such as cell phones may put the world in your hands, but they also engage your mind so fully that once you focus on them, you're not driving safely anymore.**
 - They saturate your attention all at once.
 - This applies to those hands-free devices, as well.

- **Don't underestimate the risk of a "simple" activity like talking on the phone as you drive.**
 - Studies show that talking to someone who isn't in the car with you is significantly more distracting than talking to a passenger.
 - In fact, drivers chatting on their cells actually take longer to get where they're going, because their minds are "slightly elsewhere."
 - This is why "hands-free" cell phones deliver no real safety benefit, because they distract drivers' minds just as much as the handheld models.

- **Texting requires you look at the phone (a visual distraction)... read and compose a message (cognitive distractions)... and key your reply into the phone (a manual distraction).**
 - That's why texting while you drive multiplies the risk of having a crash up to 23 times.
 - It's also why simply stopping drivers from texting could prevent so many accidents and injuries.

- **And remember, there isn't just one cell phone on the road. There are millions of them.**
 - And a lot of us use them while we're driving.
 - The National Safety Council estimates that at any given moment, fully 10% of US drivers on the road are talking on their cell phones.
 - Add in all the other drivers being distracted by other things and it's scary to think how many people are at risk, right now, from distracted drivers.
- **At times, trying to combat distracted driving can seem hopeless.**
 - But understanding how distraction occurs means we can take steps to head it off before we get behind the wheel.
 - There are a number of good techniques that all of us can use.
- **You'll never be distracted by a phone that doesn't ring.**
 - Before you drive, record an alternate outgoing voicemail message that tells callers you're driving and will get back to them when you're off the road.
 - It's also a great way to "lead by example." Anyone who receives your message may be encouraged to do the same when they drive.
- **Then turn your cell phone off and stow it.**
 - Put it away out of your reach, so you won't be tempted to take it out and turn it back on if you get bored.
 - A variety of cell phone apps are also available to disable calling and texting functions, silence alerts and send customized auto-responses.
- **Prepare navigation ahead of time.**
 - When you plan to use a GPS, program your destination before you drive.
 - Not only will you eliminate an on-the-road interruption, you'll do a better job and get better results.

- **If you prefer a printed map or written directions, review them in advance.**
 - Don't wait until you're on the road to use an Internet-based mapping service, either.
- **Finish dressing and personal grooming before you get behind the wheel.**
 - Brushing your hair or applying makeup takes a lot of concentration.
 - The results can be really bad when you're trying to drive at the same time!
- **Secure children and pets.**
 - Turning around to deal with "loose" kids in the back seat while you're driving can lead to disaster.
 - So can having an excited or frightened pet running around the car.
 - Make sure kids are safely seated and belted in, and pets are properly restrained before you turn the ignition key.
- **Get to know your vehicle.**
 - If you're driving an unfamiliar company car or rental, take the time to locate important controls such as headlights, wipers, the defroster and other knobs and buttons you might need in a hurry.
 - Set as many of them as possible before you start your trip.
 - If necessary, ask a coworker for help, or check the driver's manual.
 - Fix the seat position so you can operate pedals comfortably, and adjust all mirrors to minimize your blind spots.
- **Taking steps to prevent distraction before you get behind the wheel is important, but it's just the first step in fighting distraction.**
 - Even with good preparation, there are plenty of things that can happen while you're on the road.
 - Fortunately, there are effective techniques you can use to stay safe once you're rolling.

- **Focus on driving. Trying to "multi-task" behind the wheel is dangerous.**
 - Don't ever text, surf the web, read email or talk on a cellphone while driving.
 - Refrain from eating, drinking, reading, grooming, or any other activity that takes your hands off the wheel, or your mind or eyes off the road.
- **When in doubt, pull over.**
 - If you need to make a call, reprogram your GPS, deal with a "kids issue", or anything else that requires your attention, pull over to a safe area first.
- **Use your passengers. They can be a good resource!**
 - Ask them to take a call, consult the map, reprogram the radio, or provide other help.
- **Stay cool. It's your responsibility to keep focused.**
 - Don't allow yourself to get disturbed or agitated by things inside or outside your vehicle.
 - Whether its accidents, aggressive drivers, pedestrians, billboards, the unexpected or the interesting, keep your hands, eyes and mind on your driving.
- **Steer clear of distracted drivers. These folks can kill you, so sharpen your "spotting" skills. Look for,**
 - Drivers going much faster or slower than the speed limit or traffic flow.
 - Drivers who needlessly change speed.
 - Drivers who stop longer than required at a traffic light or sign.
 - Drivers who can't stay in their lane, or who weave through traffic.
- **If you encounter a distracted driver:**
 - Assume they don't see your car at all.
 - Give them a wide berth by pulling ahead or dropping behind them.
 - If you can't get away, or they are really driving erratically, call 911 and report their behavior to the police.

- **Do not make any effort to get the other driver to pay attention to you.**
 - That can just increase their distraction and the potential for danger.
 - Focus your own attention on your vehicle, your passengers...and yourself.
- **What should you do if you're in a car with a distracted driver?**
 - Remember that distracted driving kills people.
 - Speak up and let the driver know you're concerned.
 - Be polite and helpful.
 - Calmly say, "You know, I think it's getting a little too crazy in here. Why don't we pull over and sort it out?"
 - Offer to handle the cell phone, deal with navigation or pets, anything that will diminish the driver's distractions and promote safety.

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- **Distracted driving causes thousands of accidents, injuries and fatalities every year.**
- **Stopping distracted driving begins with each of us individually making a commitment to stick to safe driving habits.**
- **Before you drive, finish getting dressed, putting on make-up and other grooming.**
- **Tell the world you're busy.**
 - Record an outgoing voicemail on your cell phone, explaining that you're driving and will get back to them later.
 - Then turn your cell phone off and stow it out of reach.
- **Adjust seats and mirrors, and program the entertainment system.**
- **Program your navigation.**
- **Make sure kids and pets are safely seated and secured.**

- **On unfamiliar vehicles, locate the important controls and learn how they work.**
- **When you're on the road, stay focused on your driving. If something else needs your attention, pull over.**
- **Steer clear of distracted drivers. If you can't avoid them, call 911.**
- **If you're a passenger in a car driven by a distracted person, speak up. Be helpful.**
- **You can't control other drivers, but you can control your own driving habits.**
 - Keeping your hands on the wheel, your eyes on the road and your mind focused on driving doesn't just make you a safer driver.
 - It's how you can help save lives every minute you're behind the wheel!