

## April 2018: Distracted Driving Awareness Month

### Distracted Driving Awareness Month 2018:

Motor vehicle fatalities are up 6% from 2015, with more than 40,000 people killed in 2017. 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.

### Ending Distracted Driving is Everyone's Responsibility

Thousands have Died in Crashes Involving Cell Phone Use:

Many distractions exist while driving, but cell phones are a top distraction because so many drivers use them for long periods of time each day. Almost everyone has seen a driver distracted by a cell phone, but when you are the one distracted, you often don't realize that driver is you.

New technology in vehicles is causing us to become more distracted behind the wheel than ever before. Fifty-three percent of drivers believe if manufacturers put "infotainment" dashboards and hands-free technology in vehicles, they must be safe. And, with some state laws focusing on hand-held bans, many drivers honestly believe they are making the safe choice by using a hands-free device. But in fact, these technologies distract our brains even long after you've used them.

**Make no mistake:** This multitasking technology is about convenience, not safety.

While no state has a law prohibiting all cell phone use while driving, employers are putting policies in place banning the use of handheld and hands-free devices. See how the city of Tulsa implemented a total-ban cell phone policy for employees.



### Safer Workers Means Safer Roads for All:

- Every 7 seconds, someone is injured in a car crash.
- Every 15 minutes, someone is killed.
- Many of the crashes occur during the work day or the daily commute.
- Employers absorb costs associated with these crashes, whether they occur on or off the job.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the #1 cause of workplace death.

Employers have a significant role in reducing vehicle crashes. Through workplace policies and education, employers can help protect their workforce, protect their organizations and, in turn, protect employees' own families and communities.

### Police Reports Don't Capture the Real Reasons Drivers Crash:

The National Safety Council examined police reports from 50 states and Washington, D.C., to determine what data states are tracking with regard to motor vehicle crashes. NSC found that no state fully captures the data required by government and traffic safety organizations to understand the real causes of crashes and effectively address the problems.

According to the NSC report, Under-counted is Under-invested: How Incomplete Crash Reports Impact Efforts to Save Lives:

- No state crash reports have fields or codes for police to record the level of driver fatigue at the time of a crash.
- 26 state reports lack fields to capture texting.
- 32 states lack fields to record hands-free cell phone use.
- 32 states lack fields to record specific types of drug use identified on positive drug tests, including marijuana.



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## Police Reports Don't Capture the Real Reasons Drivers Crash Continued:

States also fail to capture the use of advanced driver assistance technologies (50 states), teen driver restrictions (35 states) and the use of infotainment systems (47 states).

An estimated 40,000 people died in car crashes in 2016. That marks a 6% increase over 2015 and a 14% increase over 2014 – the most dramatic two-year escalation since 1964. Without a clear understanding of the scope of the problem, regulations, laws and policies to combat certain issues, like distracted driving, become more difficult to justify.

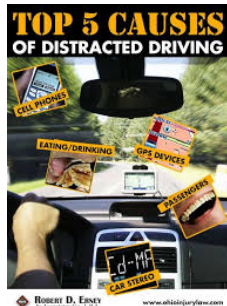
### Critical Crash Factors

NSC identified 23 crash factors that should be captured on police reports. While no state is capturing all 23, Kansas and Wisconsin lead the nation by including 14 of the factors identified as critical by NSC. Maryland, Kentucky and Nebraska each are capturing just five factors.

Six states – Arizona, California, Colorado, Maine, New York and Virginia – do not provide fields or codes for police to capture alcohol impairment at low levels (below the legal limit of .08) even though fatal crashes involving drivers with low BAC are not uncommon. Of the eight states that have decriminalized recreational marijuana use, only Alaska, California, Oregon and Washington include fields and codes to record positive marijuana results from drug tests.

NSC is calling for law enforcement and the traffic safety community to take several actions to ensure better data collection, including:

- Moving toward the use of electronic data collection.
- Capturing emerging technology issues.
- Adopting an investigatory approach to car crashes.
- Collecting advanced driver assistance technology information and other details through electronic data recorders.



## 2017 Estimates Show Vehicle Fatalities Topped 40,000 for Second Straight Year

Preliminary estimates from the National Safety Council indicate motor vehicle deaths dipped slightly – 1% – in 2017, claiming 40,100 lives versus the 2016 total of 40,327. The small decline is not necessarily an indication of progress, as much as a leveling off of the steepest two-year increase in more than 50 years.

The 2017 assessment is 6% higher than the number of deaths in 2015. If the estimate holds, it will be the second consecutive year that motor vehicle deaths topped 40,000.

About 4.57 million people were injured seriously enough to require medical attention in motor vehicle crashes in 2017, and costs to society totaled \$413.8 billion. Both figures are about 1% lower than 2016 calculations.

"The price we are paying for mobility is 40,000 lives each year," said NSC President and CEO Deborah A.P. Hersman. "This is a stark reminder that our complacency is killing us. The only acceptable number is zero; we need to mobilize a full court press to improve roadway safety."

Factors impacting motor vehicle fatality trends include an improved economy, which has helped fuel a 1% increase in miles driven from 2016 to 2017.

### NSC is Calling for Life-saving Measures

To help ensure safer roads, NSC urges motorists to:

Practice defensive driving; buckle up, designate a sober driver or arrange alternative transportation, get plenty of sleep to avoid fatigue, and drive attentively, avoiding distractions.

Recognize the dangers of drugged driving, including impairment from prescription opioids; visit [StopEverydayKillers.org](http://StopEverydayKillers.org) to understand the impact of the nation's opioid crisis.

Stay engaged in teens' driving habits; visit [DriveitHOME.org](http://DriveitHOME.org) for resources.

Learn about your vehicle's safety systems and how to use them; visit [MyCarDoesWhat.org](http://MyCarDoesWhat.org) for information.

Fix recalls immediately; visit [ChecktoProtect.org](http://ChecktoProtect.org) to ensure your vehicle does not have an open recall.

Ask lawmakers and state leaders to protect travelers on state roadways; the NSC State of Safety report shows which states have the strongest and weakest traffic safety laws.

Join the Road to Zero to understand how safety professionals are addressing motor vehicle fatalities; visit [nsc.org/roadtozero](http://nsc.org/roadtozero) to get involved.

Zero traffic deaths sounds like a lofty goal, but it's attainable based on a few driving principles:

- Traffic fatalities are preventable.
- A future with zero traffic deaths is more certain than ever with the emergence of self-driving cars and the Safe Systems transportation approach.
- A coordinated effort that brings together multiple stakeholders with the same goal can achieve more than individual organizations working independently.

