

What to Do When a Distracted Driver Sends Your Health and Finances Into a Tailspin

Introduction

Did you know that taking your eyes off the road for as little as two seconds can double your risk of being in a Georgia car accident?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states that 80 percent of all accidents happen because of distracted driving, and 16 percent of highway crashes happen because of distracted driving. These numbers prove the inherent risk that goes along with driving while not completely focused on the road.

While many people understand and acknowledge how risky this behavior is, numerous studies show that drivers continue to drive while distracted.

When something goes wrong on the road, and you're in the path of a distracted driver, the outcome can be devastating. Distracted driving accidents tend to cause greater damage because the person not paying attention to the road is not able to slow down or avoid a collision as fast.

Why We Wrote This Report: Information Is Power

The goal of this book is not to leave you frightened by the statistics of how many distracted drivers share the road with you. It is also not intended to make you feel scared every time you get behind the wheel.

We wrote this book to help you learn *how drivers get distracted behind the wheel* in Georgia, *why* distracted driving accidents continue to occur, and *what we can do* to prevent these accidents from proliferating.

However, the primary reason for this report is to help you understand that *you have options* after a distracted driving accident. Every day across the United States, distracted drivers seriously injure people like you. Although your accident differs from any other accident, it can be helpful to know that you have legal options available to you. Learning these options and how others in similar situations have handled their case can help you decide how you will handle yours.

Who This Report Is For?

It is our belief that there is not enough done to prevent distracted driving accidents in Georgia. We wrote this book to help shed light on this dangerous behavior behind the wheel. By helping victims hurt by distracted driver get the help and care they need after a serious car accident, it is our hope that distracted drivers will become more aware of the dangers their behavior presents on the road.

This Book Answers Your Top Questions

It is our aim to provide you with comprehensive information to guide you in getting the most out of your claim. In this book, you will learn:

- How to recognize a distracted driving accident
- Critical first steps to take after being in an accident with a distracted driver
- Why it can help to have an attorney on your side after an accident with a distracted driver
- What to ask when searching for the right attorney for your claim
- The types of damages available after a distracted driving accident
- What to expect during a distracted driving accident claim
- Answers to the top questions distracted driving victims have about their claim

The Law Offices of Shane Smith believes that knowledge is power. By learning more about what causes distracted driving accidents, and the statistics behind these types of accidents, we can understand the full story about what occurs on our Georgia roadways every day. If you are a victim of a distracted driving auto accident, you will have a strong start to pursuing your car accident claim. It is our hope that you will find with this book the information and legal guidance you need after a distracted driver puts your life in a tailspin.

Ready to speak with a personal injury attorney in Atlanta today? Call 888-927-6955 to schedule a free, confidential consultation.

What Is a Distracted Driving Accident?

Michael, a student at Georgia State University, was driving to a friend's house in Marietta on the weekend for a party. Anxious to get there, he started texting his friends to get directions, to learn what was happening at the house, and find out who was already at the party.

While Michael was looking down at his text message, his car blew through a red light and slammed into Julie, a law-abiding driver passing through the intersection. Julie was badly injured with a shoulder fracture and traumatic brain injury. She came to our law firm for help settling her claim.

Stories like Julie's are all too common. On average, distracted drivers hurt 448,000 people each year. That means that more people are injured by this preventable, negligent driving behavior than the population of Atlanta.

Distracted driving is not limited to driving while using a cell phone. Anytime a driver gets behind the wheel, he has a responsibility to give his complete focus to the road ahead. Taking this focus away to talk to a passenger, answer a phone call, take a bite of food, or do anything else other than focus on driving a vehicle is considered distracted driving.

What many licensed drivers fail to remember is that when they are behind the wheel of a car, they are operating a piece of machinery that has the potential to do great harm to someone—even to take a person's life. By not paying close attention to the road and their surroundings, distracted drivers put people's lives at risk.

Why Has Distracted Driving Boomed in Recent Years?

In 1933, car manufacturers were undoubtedly excited to be able to offer an innovative new piece of technology in the cars they sold: car radios, pre-installed. This was the start of new gadgets and distractions in vehicles that had the potential to take a driver's mind, eyes, and hands off the road and steering wheel.

In the years to follow, technology continued to advance—allowing drivers the ability to listen to cassette tapes, CDs, or mp3 players. Phones became a prominent feature in many cars, offering drivers the luxury of talking to people while they drove.

It's not a secret that the advancement of technology has continued to spread into vehicles. Now, car manufacturers realize the dangers of many of these attractive features in cars, and they have started to develop new technology to allow drivers a safer way to put their favorite devices to use while driving. When a person goes to buy a new car they are offered hands-free radio, Bluetooth, and other options to help a driver control both his phone and vehicle without having to take his attention away

from the road. Although this technology certainly reduces the amount of distraction while driving, it does not stop distracted driving behavior altogether.

Although distracted driving goes beyond technology, the introduction of new features and new distractions into cars has contributed to the proliferation of distracted drivers on the road. Today, it is up to drivers to act responsibly while behind the wheel to avoid these distractions and keep their eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, and mind on the task at hand.

The Faces Behind Distracted Driving

There is a common misunderstanding that the people who drive while distracted are limited to teenagers and young people on cell phones. However, this could not be further from the truth.

Looking at the various types of distracted driving, you can see that there are far more types of distractions that can happen in a car than just cell phones. People of all ages admit to these distractions. In a poll done by HealthDay in 2011 showed that most adults admitted to engaging in some type of distracted behavior while behind the wheel. Although the poll found that younger drivers tend to have a higher likelihood of engaging in distracting behavior than older people, drivers of all ages admitted to driving while distracted.

Understanding the variety of ways a person can be distracted while driving helps shed light on why so many people are driving without giving their full attention to the road.

Types of Distracted Driving Accidents

Distracted driving accidents are broken up into three main categories: visual, cognitive, and manual. When any one of these senses is engaged in something other than its surroundings and operating the vehicle, the driver is at a higher risk of causing a distracted driving crash.

- **Visual.** Looking away—even for a split second—can cause a person to miss a red light, a stop sign, a pedestrian in the street, or a road hazard. When people look down to find something in the car, read a text message, or do anything else that takes their eyes off the road, they are visually distracted.
- **Manual.** When a driver takes her hands off the wheel to reach for food, drinks, or anything else in the car, she is unable to respond quickly to a hazard in the road. Many times, when a person is manually distracted behind the wheel, she also is cognitively and visually distracted as well.

- **Cognitive.** While operating a vehicle, a driver must be mentally engaged in his surroundings. If he is lost in thought or emotionally distraught, he may not notice road signs, traffic signals, or any other hazards.

Let's take a closer look at how each of those breaks down into daily habits and activities people commonly engage in while driving.

CELL PHONE USAGE

Cell phone use is the biggest cause of distracted driving accidents. The National Safety Council (NSC) estimates that 2.6 million crashes annually happen because of some type of cell phone use, including talking and text messaging. This equates to approximately 43 percent of all traffic accidents, or one accident every 24 seconds attributed to a driver distracted by their cell phone.

In spite of hands-free devices, cell phone distractions continue to be a major cause of distracted-driving traffic accidents. The NSC found that cell phone use is not only a visual and manual distraction, but also a cognitive distraction. Even when a driver does not pick up their phone to talk, or look at their phone, their focus on the road is reduced by approximately 37 percent.

In another recent study done by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), findings showed that approximately 69 percent of adults ages 18 to 64 admit to talking on their cell phones while driving. Fully 31 percent of these adults also admitted to reading or sending texts while driving. In spite of the dangers, many adult drivers still take the risk of driving while talking or texting.

EATING

The NHTSA found that 86 percent of drivers admitted to drinking or eating while driving. This high number may be due to the fact that people now spend more time in their car.

With the long commutes people make in traffic, and driving from the outskirts of Atlanta into the city to work make it difficult to avoid sipping on a coffee or scarfing down breakfast while behind the wheel. Likewise, families have busier schedules than ever, making it difficult to find time to eat while not driving from one place to the next. Perhaps the most common culprit for eating while driving is a truck driver who lives on the road.

In spite of people struggling to find time to eat, it is important to remember that this behavior can be tremendously distracting because the driver takes his hands and eyes off the road. When people reach down to take a bite of a hamburger or a spoonful of

soup, steering becomes difficult, their attention turns to their food, and if they spill, they take your eyes off the road instinctively to clean up the mess that was just created.

Even when finding time to eat can be difficult, it is important to remember the risk taken every time someone picks up a bite to eat or reaches for a beverage to sip. It is not worth risking the lives of the driver and others on the road.

SMOKING

Although rarely discussed, one of the top distracting behaviors drivers engage in is smoking while behind the wheel. When a driver lights a cigarette, he must take at least one hand off the wheel and look down to be sure they put the flame in the right spot. Then he drives away with a lit cigarette.

Operating a vehicle while handling a lit cigarette is dangerous. The smoke from the cigarette can impair your vision and make it more difficult to see the road. Flicking the ashes off the cigarette and taking a drag can also be distracting. If something goes wrong and the cigarette falls on the floor or ashes get on the driver's clothes, the driver will be distracted trying to put the cigarette out or remove the stain from their clothing.

When a driver smokes while operating a vehicle, his attention is constantly torn between the road and manipulating his lit cigarette. This divided focus can be enormously distracting, and increase the risk of an accident.

LOOKING FOR DIRECTIONS

It is easy to get lost or need directions to find your way to a new location in a city as big as Atlanta. To help, many drivers reach for maps, printed directions, or their electronic navigation devices to help them reach their destination.

In the poll by HealthDay, 41 percent of drivers admitted to using a GPS system while driving, and 36 percent of drivers said they used a map for guidance while driving. The NHTSA determined that men are more likely than women to use navigation systems or smartphones for driving directions. As helpful as these devices can be, they can also distract drivers and take their attention off the road.

It is particularly dangerous to use a smartphone for directions. Drivers who have their smartphones out and readily available can become more easily distracted by an incoming phone call, text message, or email. This can increase how distracted a person is while driving in a new area.

GROOMING

It seems that many experienced drivers have a story of when they saw a woman applying makeup while driving or a man combing his hair while behind the wheel. In fact, many people treat this behavior behind the wheel almost as a joke. In today's fast-paced society, getting ready for a meeting for work or with friends can be difficult and some drivers save their grooming regime for the road.

In the study conducted by HealthDay, 20 percent of drivers admitted to styling their hair while driving. Another 14 percent of drivers admitted to putting on makeup while driving. Doing this can take your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, and mind off driving—and can increase your likelihood of causing a crash.

ADJUSTING RADIO OR CLIMATE CONTROLS

Just because you can change the radio or fiddle with new gadgets in the car doesn't mean you should...not while you're driving, at least. Any time you reach down to make an adjustment in the car, you are distracted from the road before you. According to the NHTSA, adjusting the car radio is the second most common distracting behavior while driving. Changing climate controls is a similarly common distraction in vehicles.

When drivers look down and reach for something, it takes their eyes and minds off the road. To make an adjustment to the radio station or to the climate settings in a vehicle, the driver's hands are removed from the steering wheel too. Even if the driver only looks away for two seconds, the risk of an accident increases by approximately nine times.

OTHER PASSENGERS IN THE CAR (INCLUDING FIDO)

Having other people in the car with you increases the opportunity for distraction. In fact, a study by the American Automobile Association (AAA) showed that talking to a passenger is just as distracting as talking on a hands-free device. This, we learned, reduces focus on the road by as much as 37 percent

Parents in particular are more distracted while driving with their children. In fact, a study done by Monash University found that having at least one child in the car increased the distraction by 12 times more than talking on a phone while driving. Parental instinct is to console kids who are upset or in need of a toy or bottle. Many parents admit to rummaging around in a diaper bag or the car to find objects to keep their child happy. These parents then take their hands off the wheel to reach back and give their child the object, distracting them even further.

Parents who talk on the phone while driving pose an even greater risk. Almost 90 percent of parents surveyed admitted to using their phone in some capacity—hands-free, or handheld. These parents were 2.6 times more likely to have been in a car accident than those parents who kept the phone put away.

People are not the only distractions drivers have in cars. Pets can also be very distracting. A study done by the AAA found that 59 percent of respondents admitted to having been distracted by their dog at some point. In spite of this, the majority of pet owners do not travel with any kind of pet restraint for their pets, leaving their dogs to roam throughout the car distracting the driver.

RUBBERNECKING

This funny term refers to something very serious. Rubbernecking got its name from the way people behave when they see an accident or distraction outside of the car on the roadside. Instead of watching the roadway, when something catches their eye, their neck tends to turn into rubber stretching to see what happened.

You've heard the expression that curiosity killed the cat. Unfortunately, human curiosity injures humans too—sometimes fatally. As humans, we love to check things out. Whether it be someone attractive, a new store opening up, or a bad car accident on the side of the road, we tend to take notice of extraordinary sights. This doesn't stop while we're driving.

When a driver rubbernecks or turns to see something noticeable on the side of the road, he takes his eyes off the cars in front of him. When this happens, he is distracted for just enough time to miss seeing another distracted driver talking on her cell phone pull out in front of his vehicle. This can—and frequently does—lead to a serious collision.

Although all of these behaviors are dangerous, many drivers struggle to eliminate them and turn their focus completely to the road ahead. After all, parents must drive their children from place to place, and many people like to protect the environment by carpooling with others to and from work, or social events.

When you are aware of the dangers of distracted driving, it is easier to prevent your attention from drifting.

What a Distracted Driver Looks Like on the Road

The statistics tell a clear story that there is a real danger of distracted drivers on the roadway. Knowing what to look for while driving can help protect yourself from being a victim of a distracted driver's negligent behavior, and potentially save you from serious injury in a crash. Although it is impossible to avoid all distracted drivers, recognizing behaviors of drivers that are not focused on the road can serve as a warning to keep a safer distance.

Let's take a closer look at what a distracted driver may look like on the road.

Swerving

When a driver takes her eyes or hands off the wheel, she is not able to control the vehicle properly. Taking her eyes off the road for as little as two seconds can cause a driver to swerve slightly into another lane. Taking her hands off the wheel to take a bite to eat or send a text message can also cause a driver to lose temporary control of her vehicle, causing her to weave in and out of her lane.

If you see a driver swerving, it is important that you do not try to pass her on the road or linger for too long in her blind spot. Assume she does not see you and wait until there is a safe point to distance yourself from her or get out of her path.

Ignoring traffic signals

When a driver's visual or cognitive focus is not on the road in front of him, it can be easy to ignore the traffic signals ahead. This has the potential to cause a driver to run a stop sign or red light without realizing it, putting everyone in danger at each intersection he crosses through.

If you see a driver who has run a stop sign or a red light, you may want to distance yourself from that driver. Because his attention is not on driving or on the road, it is difficult to know what other distracted driving behaviors he may have. One wrong move on the road because of his negligent driving behavior, and he may cause a serious car accident.

Slow reaction times

Have you ever been behind a driver who consistently had to slam on her brakes to stop from hitting the person in front of her? This driver may have been distracted. When a driver's attention is on something other than the road in front of her, she may not realize that traffic ahead is stopped as quickly as if she were paying close attention to driving. This significantly slows her reaction time, causing her to slam on her brakes and leave a dangerous wake behind her.

If you see a driver who seems to have slow reaction times to stopped or slowed traffic, it is critical that you keep a safe distance between yourself and her car. You must ensure you have plenty of time to stop if she slams on her brakes or frantically swerves to avoid something in the road.

Critical Next Steps After a Distracted Driving Accident

Although you may know what distracted driving behavior looks like, avoiding these drivers can be impossible, especially when the driver swerves or comes out of nowhere as he runs a red light. If you are in his path, you may be struck without warning.

Car accidents of any kind are traumatic. Knowing that the driver who hit you was distracted and that his distraction caused the crash can make an already difficult situation even worse. Understandably, you may feel angry, frustrated, and upset. However, amidst all of your hurt—physically and emotionally—it is important that you handle your case in the right way. Not doing so could cause you to jeopardize your settlement and leave you to pay the price for a distracted driver's negligence.

Below we examine some of the most critical first steps you must take following a distracted driving accident.

Seek Medical Attention Immediately

There is a lot happening at the scene of an accident. Your adrenaline is racing and you may think that you escaped without injury. However, your body may be masking what could be a serious injury. Don't risk your injuries not being paid for because you did not get checked out!

Even if you do not think you have any more than a few bumps and bruises, it is crucial that you seek medical attention **right away**. Getting checked out as soon after your accident as possible ensures that you get fast treatment for any hidden ailments. You may be surprised to find out that you hit your head harder than you realized, or that your muscles may have torn or been hurt in the collision.

When you seek immediate medical help, you let a trained professional diagnose your injuries. This can do a few things for you after a car accident.

First—and most important—it ensures that you get the treatment you need right away. Delaying medical care can increase the risk of your injuries worsening over time. Without immediate treatment, you may cause your body permanent damage or extend the time it takes for you to heal from your injuries.

Delaying medical treatment can also harm your case. Without documenting your injuries right away with the help of a trained professional, you risk the insurance company's not paying for the treatments you need. Insurance companies are skilled at finding reasons to minimize how much they pay in your settlement. Without proper documentation that your injuries were a direct result of your car accident, you may not get the compensation you need and deserve after a crash.

Start Gathering Evidence Right Away

Another way that insurance companies limit how much they pay you in a car accident claim is by using evidence against you. To strengthen your claim, it is critical that you gather evidence that shows the severity of the car accident, shows that the other driver was at fault for the car accident, and proves your injuries were caused by the auto accident.

It can be especially difficult to prove that the other driver was distracted when she collided with you. After a car accident, you only have a limited time to gather evidence to prove the other driver was distracted.

Some of the top pieces of evidence you will want to keep and collect include:

- Photographs from the scene of the accident, such as pictures of your property damage and of your injuries.
- Witness accounts of the driver being distracted and of how the accident happened.
- A police report of what happened at the accident.
- A journal of your injuries and daily symptoms following the crash.
- Medical records that show your injuries from the accident.

Having this information strengthens your case and makes it more difficult for the insurance companies to deny you the settlement you deserve. When you present the evidence that the driver who hit you was distracted and that her distraction caused your accident and injuries, you maximize how much you will receive in a settlement. This is important if you do not want to pay for the poor decisions made by the distracted driver who hit you.

Find a Skilled Distracted Driving Accident Lawyer

This may surprise you, but the insurance company is already working against you. From the minute the insurance adjusters learn of a new accident, their investigation is launched. Using their experience investigating and managing car accident cases, they work hard to show that you were at least partially to blame for the car accident happening.

With the insurance company already working against you, it is critical that you hire a distracted driving accident lawyer to help you with your claim. A lawyer understands the process the insurance adjusters use to minimize your claim, and your attorney knows how to combat their objections to giving you the full settlement you deserve.

It is important that you find a lawyer who has experience specifically handling distracted driving claims. This will ensure that you get the best results possible. A distracted driving lawyer understands specifically what the insurance company is looking for in these unique types of accidents, and he knows how to help you gather the right evidence to prove that the other driver's distracted mind and behavior caused your crash.

Finding a lawyer may seem like a step you never anticipated needing to take. However, learning and understanding how a lawyer can help you get the justice you deserve in this painful situation can give you a better understanding of why having a lawyer on your side is so critical.

Seven Ways an Attorney Can Help You Get Full Justice After a Distracted Driving Accident

When a driver acts irresponsibly while operating such a heavy piece of machinery and you find yourself in his path, you should not have to pay for his negligent behavior. Although it may seem as if your accident is a simple, straightforward case, you may be surprised at just how complicated it can become.

As you begin the process of seeking full justice for your injuries and property damage, there are a few ways you can go about it. You can try to go it alone, fighting tooth and nail with the insurance adjuster to negotiate a fair settlement for the pain you've endured. You can accept a settlement that's significantly lower than what you deserve, costing you your money to pay for someone else's mistakes. Or you can work with a skilled distracted driving accident attorney in Atlanta to help you navigate the murky waters of distracted driving accident claims.

You may have never anticipated needing an attorney to represent your case. After all, you're not the type of person who normally escalates a situation unnecessarily. However, when a person acts negligently and operates a vehicle while distracted, he puts your health and wellbeing at risk. Hiring an attorney can be the best way to hold that person accountable for his actions.

Here are a few reasons why using the help of an attorney in your case allows you to get the full justice you deserve.

Your lawyer will help you learn and understand your legal rights

The outcome of your claim can have a serious impact on you and your family. Having legal guidance on your side every step of the way can help ensure you get the best outcome possible from your claim.

You have legal rights after a car accident. The insurance adjuster will not tell you these rights, because it could cost his firm more money. Your friends and family may not know the rights you have available to you. The only person you can rely on with 100 percent certainty to help you learn and understand your legal rights after a distracted driving accident is an experienced professional.

When you understand the process of your claim, the type of compensation you are entitled to receive, and your legal rights in pursuing your settlement, you can be confident that you will get the maximum settlement possible in your claim.

Your lawyer can help you find the right doctors to help you with your injuries and treatment

Many car accident victims wonder where they should go for help with their injuries after a crash. Surprisingly, some doctors do not like to treat victims of car accidents.

This can make it difficult to know how to trust and how to find the right person to help you with your injuries.

Whenever someone calls the Law Offices of Shane Smith and asks how to find the right doctor, our answer is always the same. If you already have doctors that you trust, it is a good idea to visit them first—and visit them quickly.

Seeing your family care doctor, the person who is most familiar with your medical history, can strengthen your case. This person knows what ailments you had prior to the accident. Knowing this can help diagnose other ailments that the accident may have caused. You may not be aware that some of these ailments exist. For example, traumatic brain injuries can be difficult to detect immediately following a crash. If you tell your primary care doctor your symptoms, he may be able to better determine that you have the potential for this injury and send you to get the tests needed.

Once you have visited your family care doctor, it is important that you follow all of the treatment plans he put in place. These treatment options can include physical therapy or a visit to a chiropractor.

If you do not have a doctor that you know and trust, or if your doctor will not treat car accident injuries, contact your lawyer for help finding a qualified physician to treat you. Having a lawyer on your side can help you know who has the best reputation among their clients so that you can find the right doctor and treatment facility for your needs.

Your lawyer will take on the burden of dealing with the insurance companies for you

After a serious car accident with a distracted driver, the last thing you want to focus on is negotiating a settlement. Your life was seriously disrupted by the accident, and now the only thing you can focus on is coping with the injuries that fateful accident caused. Pushy insurance adjusters just trying to take money out of your settlement are the last things on your mind.

Working with a distracted driving lawyer can ease that burden. Instead of having to negotiate with an insurance adjuster, you get to focus on healing and recovering from the damage caused to your body and to your life after a crash. Knowing you have a skilled lawyer to speak on your behalf brings you tremendous relief from worry that you will say something to put your settlement in jeopardy. Instead, you get confidence that your settlement is being handled appropriately.

The insurance company is used to working with lawyers. Insurance adjusters also know that lawyers are knowledgeable in the law. When you put a skilled attorney

on your side, you force the insurance adjuster to rethink her strategy, putting more settlement money in your pocket.

Your lawyer will put his legal experience on your side to determine what is fair compensation for your case

There is a lot that goes into determining how much your distracted driving accident claim is worth. Many of the costs that determine how much you will receive in a distracted driving claim are left up to opinion.

When you put a skilled distracted driving lawyer on your side, you also put the opinion of someone experienced and knowledgeable in the law on your side. This is enormously beneficial when trying to negotiate what you are entitled to receive in your settlement. With representation from a lawyer, you get more room to negotiate a fair and just settlement with a legal opinion based on fact working on your claim.

You will get invaluable peace of mind from knowing that you will receive the maximum available recovery for your case

Have you lost sleep at night worried about getting what you deserve in your Georgia distracted driving accident claim? If so, you're not alone. Many accident victims have the same fear, losing sleep while wondering if they are managing their settlement correctly and worried that they are leaving settlement money on the table.

When you work with a distracted driving lawyer, you can put that fear to rest. With representation from a skilled lawyer, you get confidence knowing that you will receive every penny that you deserve and that are not asking for more than your fair share. You get the invaluable peace of mind to focus on healing rather than stressing about negotiating for more or less than what you have available to you in your case.

Your lawyer can find additional sources of compensation money that you may not have known were available to you

Many distracted driving accident victims are surprised to learn of just how many sources of money are available to people injured by negligent drivers. In any car accident claim there are numerous sources of money available to help you cover the costs of your injuries, and more.

With a lawyer working diligently to research insurance policies, liability limits, and more, you may be able to find additional pockets of money that you did not know were available to you. By exposing these other sources of money, you can ensure that you are not left to pay for the mistakes of a distracted driver. Instead, you get confidence

that you receive all of the compensation to which you are entitled after a Georgia distracted driving crash.

You will have confidence that justice has been served and that you have done your part to help reduce the risk of future distracted driving accidents

Distracted driving is a dangerous behavior. The more someone does it without causing an accident, the more chances they are willing to take. Unlike other types of car accidents, distracted-driving collisions require that the driver be held responsible for her poor decisions. Many distracted drivers have difficulty taking responsibility for their actions, which can lead to more distracted-driving collisions in the future.

When you work with a distracted driving accident attorney in Atlanta, you put someone on your side to fight for you while holding the other person responsible to the fullest extent of the law. This way, you can do your part to discourage a driver from making a bad decision again in the future, at the same time you get the settlement money you deserve. Your community and roadways will be safer by teaching a distracted driver a lesson and by doing what you can to prevent her from making the same bad decisions again.

Finding the right attorney is important. You want someone to whom you feel comfortable talking. You want to feel confident in his abilities to get you the best possible outcome in your case. To do this, you need to know how to interview the person who will have a significant impact on your claim. Read further to learn the top 10 questions you'll want to have answered before you decide to hire a distracted driving accident lawyer for your claim.

Ten Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Distracted Driving Lawyer

The outcome of your distracted driving car accident case is crucial to you and your family's future. It can impact how much you will have to spend out of pocket, the type of treatment you receive, and the lesson the person who hit you will learn about his mistakes made behind the wheel.

The person you hire will have a dramatic impact on the outcome of your case. You want to find the right person to help you so that you can get the best results for you and your family. To do this, it is a good idea to sit down and interview a variety of lawyers before making your decision on whom to work with.

Here are a few questions that you may want to ask when you attend your free consultation with a prospective lawyer.

1. How many car accident cases have you represented?

Each personal injury attorney is different. Some work primarily on slip and fall accident claims, others work on medical malpractice, and some work on car accident claims. When you meet with a personal injury lawyer, it is important to find out first and foremost what his recent experience is, specifically with car accident claims.

Car accidents require a unique type of representation. When a lawyer has a wealth of experience representing victims in similar situations as yours, you can be confident that he knows what it takes to help you find the compensation available and win your case. Without this experience, you risk leaving valuable settlement money on the table because the lawyer you work with does not know where to find the pockets of money available to you after a crash.

2. How much experience in distracted driving cases do you have?

It is equally important to ask how much experience a lawyer has with your type of car accident claim. Distracted driving claims can be very difficult to pursue, especially if the lawyer you work with does not have the experience proving that another driver was distracted at the time of the crash.

Ask about the type of distracted driving accident claims the lawyer you're discussing with has experience in. Then compare this to your case. For example, if the lawyer has experience pursuing distracted driving claims primarily for people who were texting while driving, and your accident was caused by a driver rubbernecking, that attorney may not be the right fit for your claim.

3. Who will be handling my case?

In some law firms, the only job of the person you meet with during your initial consultation is to sell you the services of the law office. Then, when you agree to work with that lawyer, your claim will suddenly be sent out to another law firm, or sent down the chain to someone who is not as skilled in distracted-driving claims. This can be very costly for you.

Your settlement is critical to the future of you and your family. It is imperative that you feel comfortable with and confident in the person you choose to represent you.

Ask up front who will handle your claim. Explain that you want to meet the person who will represent you in front of the insurance adjuster. If the person you meet explains that this law firm frequently sends injury cases to other people, or if he is not able to tell you who will be assigned your case, consider this a red flag. Without meeting with the lawyer representing you, you have no idea the skill or background of the person who plays such a key role in your future.

4. What challenges do you see in my case?

The lawyer you speak with should immediately be able to pinpoint any challenges that may present themselves in your case. Not being able to do so could be a sign that his is not qualified to represent your case to the fullest degree.

If the lawyer you meet identifies potential challenges in your case, follow up on each challenge by asking how he plans to overcome them. This will examine his level of experience and help you understand exactly how he plans to help you. Some lawyers are eager to win your business, but then do not have a solid plan in place for how to overcome each challenge. This can be very costly to your case, so it is better to get all of the concerns addressed up front.

5. Will you take my case to trial if necessary?

The truth is, many personal injury lawyers do not feel comfortable taking a car accident claim to trial and they will do everything they can to stay away from the judge and jury. Although it's not ideal for anyone to have to go to trial, the truth of the matter is that sometimes it's a necessity to ensure you get what you deserve out of a car crash claim. This is particularly true with distracted-driving accidents.

Talk to your lawyer about his experience in the courtroom. The lawyer you want to hire should have no hesitation bringing your claim to court if necessary. In addition, he should be confident in his ability to try a case in front of a jury to get you the results

you need. Some lawyers crumble in this situation, but you need a lawyer who will stand strong just in case your case goes that far.

6. How do you investigate distracted driving cases?

There are a number of ways an attorney can investigate a distracted driving case. Some ways are more effective than others. It is important that you determine specifically what your lawyer will do to find evidence that proves the other driver was distracted when they hit you.

Talking to the lawyer you interview about how he plans to investigate your distracted-driving case can be an eye-opening discussion. You may learn new tactics for investigating a claim that you did not know were available to you. You may also discover new challenges in investigating a distracted driving crash that you did not anticipate. The method your lawyer chooses to use to investigate your claim is important to the outcome of your case.

Some ways to investigate a distracted driving crash include:

- Cellphone records
- Evaluation of evidence gathered at the scene
- Witness testimony
- Expert testimony
- Police reports
- Hospital and medical records

Armed with this information, your lawyer should be able to show that the person who hit you was distracted while behind the wheel. This evidence can also show the extent of injuries that the driver's distraction caused. All of this plays a critical role in how much your case is worth.

7. What kind of case results have you achieved in other distracted driving cases?

Although every case is unique, you can get a good idea of what to expect from a distracted driving accident lawyer by looking at his past case results. You can anticipate that the results the attorney shows you are ones that he considers to be winning results. This will help you understand what the lawyer considers to be a good settlement in a case like yours.

If the lawyer you're meeting with dodges the question or does not have any case results he wants to show you, be wary. This attorney may not be proud of what he has

accomplished for his other clients. This is another red flag that shows that the results he anticipates achieving for you may not be what you expect or deserve to receive in a settlement offer.

8. What will be the final outcome of my case? (NOTE: This is a trick question)

It'd be nice to be able to predict the future and have a crystal ball show you exactly what you will receive in a settlement. This is particularly true when the large medical bills start to pile up while you negotiate your settlement. However, **it is not possible to say with 100 percent certainty what will happen in your claim.**

When you're sitting in front of a lawyer at your initial consultation, he has not yet begun to process your claim. He cannot know all of the details and he cannot know what his investigation will turn up. This means that he cannot know the full value of your settlement.

An experienced distracted driving accident lawyer can give you estimates on how much your case may be worth. However, he cannot tell you a specific dollar amount that you should expect to receive in your settlement.

9. Are you paying anyone a referral fee if I hire you?

You didn't plan on being hit by a distracted driver. Managing a distracted driving accident claim in Georgia can cost you money that you never anticipated having to pay. You have a right to know where your money is going.

Referring lawyers reap monetary benefits from your case. By making minimal effort to assist in your case, they stand to take a significant chunk of money that should be going to cover your legal fees. This is an unethical yet common practice. You should be cautious hiring an attorney that flirts with these unethical behaviors.

The truth is, working with a lawyer ready to take your money in referral fees means that you are not working with a lawyer who has your best interest in mind. His goal is to get your money, then pass you off to a lesser-skilled attorney who is not able to give you the outcome you and your family need and deserve. If you find out that someone is getting a referral fee for taking on your case, it is a good idea to walk away.

10. What are the total costs associated with my case?

You've been through enough. Being in a car accident of any kind can be emotionally and physically draining. The last thing you need is more surprises. This includes hidden fees or costs associated with handling your claim.

Some lawyers have unrealistically low fees. Many times, these low fees are not enough to cover the costs of the type of investigation you need to get the best outcome possible for your case. To have the evidence needed to investigate your claim, your lawyer must go through records and reports in great detail. This may make the cost of your claim increase slightly, but in the end it will allow you to get the justice you deserve and the settlement you need to cover all of your costs.

Talk to your lawyer upfront about the costs you can expect with your case. This will help you to have a realistic understanding of what you can expect to pay in the end, so that you are not stuck with any unwelcome surprises.

At the Law Offices of Shane Smith, your case will never be referred to an outside lawyer. We believe in full transparency and want to give you the best experience possible after such a difficult and life-changing event. When you meet with one of our skilled distracted-driving attorneys, you can be confident that you will get the answers you need and the representation your case deserves so that you get the best possible outcome in your claim. Call us today at 707-HURT-999 or 707-487-8999 to schedule your free consultation and get to know how one of our team members can help you get the justice you deserve.

Now That You Have The Answers, How Do You Know Whom to Choose?

Interviewing an attorney is the first step, but how do you know if he is the right choice for your case? Ultimately, you want to find an attorney that you not only feel comfortable working with, but also one in whose abilities you can be confident.

Now that you have the answers you need and have met your attorney, it is time to figure out how to find the right person for your case. It's time to separate myth from reality.

Myth:

All car accident lawyers' cover distracted driving cases, so I can hire anyone to help me with my claim.

Reality:

Distracted driving claims are unique, and require the guidance and knowledge of an attorney with experience working specifically with distracted-driving accidents.

These types of accidents are very difficult to prove. You need to show that the driver was not fully focused on the road at the time of the crash, and that her distraction is what led to the accident. This can be tremendously difficult to demonstrate without knowing what evidence you must present to the insurance adjuster and how to negotiate in a way that helps you win the maximum settlement available to you for the accident.

Unlike car accident lawyers that do not handle distracted driving claims, an experienced distracted driving attorney knows what to look for and how to prove the other driver was distracted when they hit you. With help from someone that knows how insurance adjusters pursue distracted driving claims, and how to negotiate these specific claims, you can be confident that you get the best possible outcome in your case.

What Type of Damages Can You Recover?

Your life has been turned upside down, and now you have found yourself in a situation that you never imagined you would be in. As you begin to consider what happened, and what it will cost to recover, it is normal to worry about how you will pay for all of the mounting expenses.

Your settlement is meant to cover all of your costs associated with the distracted driving car crash. When you educate yourself on what your car accident costs, you have a better chance of recouping all of these costs so that you are not forced to pay for the errors of another driver. Let's take a look at all of the types of damages available to you as you settle your distracted driving accident claim.

Medical Expenses

Perhaps the biggest cost you will face after a serious distracted driving accident is your medical bills. Even with the best insurance coverage, you may still have thousands of dollars in medical costs that you never anticipated having.

In a serious car accident, you are able to recoup all of your medical expenses including those for the following:

- Ambulance ride
- Emergency room visits
- Imaging tests
- Hospital bills
- Surgical costs
- Physical therapy
- Chiropractic care
- Occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Counseling
- Personal care costs
- Follow up appointments
- Long-term medical care needs

As a rule, the settlement money should pay for any medical expense for your injuries related to the car accident. To get this money, you need to prove that your injuries were related to the car accident. This can be more difficult to prove than you may realize.

Keep a journal of all of your health concerns immediately following the accident. You should also get detailed notes from your doctor on each visit to show that your symptoms and ailments are related to the crash, and that you are doing everything you can to treat them as quickly as possible. With this information, you have a better chance at receiving a settlement that covers all of these medical costs.

Lost Wages

Was your car accident severe enough to cause injuries that forced you to miss work? In addition to your medical bills being expensive, you may lose valuable wages for time you were forced to take off from work to heal from your injuries. Although not a direct cost, this causes you to not receive the money you relied on to pay your bills.

Lost wages are available as a part of your settlement. However, you may not be able to receive the total sum of wages lost due to your injuries. Talk to your distracted driving accident lawyer to find out how much you are eligible to receive in damages for your lost wages.

Damage to Property

Your body is not the only thing damaged in an accident. The vehicle that you relied on to get you to and from work and appointments may also be damaged. If your car can be repaired, the other driver's insurance company should cover the total cost of the repairs. If your vehicle requires more repairs than it is worth, your car may be totaled.

While your car is being repaired, or while you search for a new car, you may be entitled to a rental car to help you get to and from your doctor's appointments and work. This expense should also be paid by the other driver's insurance company, so that you have a mode of transportation while your car—which the other driver wrecked—is under repair.

Punitive Damages

When a driver operates a vehicle and becomes distracted by something, such as their cell phone, grooming routine, food, or cigarette, she makes a choice to put others on the road with them in danger. When she causes a crash, she may be held liable for more than just the cost of your injuries. She may also face punitive damages.

Punitive damages are intended to punish the other driver for her negligent choices and behavior. These damages are awarded to you as the accident victim. When you seek punitive damages, you hold the other driver responsible for her bad decision. In

turn, you help prevent the driver from making the choice again to drive while distracted. This can protect you and your community from another distracted driving car crash in the future by the same driver.

Pain and Suffering

It's normal to be shaken up emotionally after a distracted driver caused a crash. In addition to the bumps, bruises, broken bones, and other serious injuries your body sustained, you also have to cope with the pain and suffering you endured as a result of the crash. Coping with this can be very difficult, and you may never fully recover from the emotional pain you sustained in your accident.

For the emotional bumps and bruises you face, pain and suffering compensation is available to you. Putting a monetary value on emotions is not easy and requires help of a distracted driving accident attorney.

At the Law Offices of Shane Smith, we know how devastating your distracted driving accident can be on your body, your emotions, and on your pocketbook. With our help, you can recoup the damages you deserve after a devastating crash, helping you get the financial assistance needed to heal from such a difficult event.

Now That You Have The Answers, How Do You Know Whom to Choose?

Now that you know what types of damages you can recover and how an attorney can help you get the maximum settlement available to you, you may be wondering what will happen during your claim. You've been through a lot. Knowing what will happen during the course of your claim can help you sleep better at night and have confidence that everything will work out in your case.

Here's a breakdown of what you should expect during your distracted driving accident claim:

Your attorney will immediately start an investigation

Once you have found the right attorney for your distracted driving accident claim, an investigation will begin almost immediately. This investigation will look for evidence that demonstrates the other driver was distracted at the time of the crash.

During the course of the investigation you may be asked to provide any information, photos, witness accounts, or other information to support your case. Your attorney will guide you to know what types of evidence is useful for your specific distracted driving accident claim.

Your attorney will likely be able to access other types of evidence to support what you have already gathered. Together with your evidence, your attorney will put together a strategy that shapes how you approach your claim with the other person's insurance company.

Your attorney will handle all communication with the insurance adjuster

When you put a lawyer on your side, you no longer have to worry about the talking to the insurance adjuster. This can take an enormous weight off your shoulders, as you no longer have to worry about saying something that could put your settlement at risk. Instead, you should immediately start directing any questions to your attorney and avoid speaking to the insurance adjuster at all.

With a skilled attorney on your side, you can be confident that everything said to the insurance adjuster will benefit your case. Your attorney will know what could potentially harm your case, and he will know what the insurance adjuster needs to hear in order to pay you the settlement you deserve in your claim.

You will still be responsible for attending all follow-up medical appointments

You will still be responsible for attending all of your medical treatments and follow-up appointments. Not doing so could put your case in jeopardy.

When you miss a treatment or doctor's appointment, the insurance adjuster may come back and claim that you did not do everything in your power to recover from your injuries in a timely manner. This may cost you a portion of your settlement for medical expenses, lost wages, and pain and suffering.

You should have regular communication with your attorney

Throughout the course of your distracted driving accident claim, you will be responsible for communicating with your attorney. Constant communication includes updates on your injuries, updates on new treatments you may need, updates on your work status, and more.

When you hire your attorney, it is important to come up with realistic expectations of when you should reach out and how frequently you can expect to hear from your attorney on updates about your claim. This way, both you and your attorney can be confident that you will constantly be kept in the loop on what's happening with the case.

There is a lot to consider as you go through the course of your distracted driving accident claim. Having an attorney by your side to guide you through it with open and honest communication can settle your mind. You will gain the confidence you need to know that everything is being handled in the right way to give you the best results possible.

If a Distracted Driver Hits You, You Need Answers

Knowing how many people are distracted on the roadway is scary. When an accident happens and you're the one in the path of the distracted driver, you may wonder where to turn. After a collision, you are undoubtedly filled with questions. How did the accident happen? What will I have to pay? Will I need an attorney to help me?

You need answers! By educating yourself, you can get the answers necessary to help make smart decisions for your distracted driving car accident and injury claim.

At the Law Offices of Shane Smith, we know the questions you probably have running through your mind, causing you to worry and lose sleep each night. These questions are the same as ones we've heard from numerous clients who have experienced similar accidents as yours. Here are answers to the top questions we hear to help you get the peace of mind you need when choosing how to handle your accident claim:

Why is it important to have an attorney if a distracted driver rear-ended me? Isn't it automatically their fault?

There is a common misperception that rear-end accidents are always the fault of the driver who rear-ended you. However—especially in the case of distracted driving crashes—this may not always be true.

Insurance adjusters are skilled at investigating and finding ways to avoid paying you the money you deserve. One of the ways they do this is by putting you at partial fault for an accident that you did not cause. Rear-end accidents are some of the most common types of collisions in which insurance adjusters do this.

Here are a few situations an insurance adjuster can claim to make you seem partially at fault for a rear-end collision by a distracted driver:

You did not properly signal to change lanes so the driver did not see you.

Your vehicle came to an improper stop in the roadway.

Your brake lights malfunctioned so the other driver did not know you were stopping.

Although you can only be found partially liable for these situations, it can still cost you valuable money in your settlement claim. For example, if your brake lights were not working properly, you may lose as much as 30 percent of your settlement for a rear-end crash caused by a distracted driver.

With help from a distracted driving attorney, you can reduce the chances of being found partially at fault in an accident. A skilled distracted driving attorney knows what the insurance adjusters are looking for and how they may find you at fault, even in a rear-end collision caused by a distracted driver. An attorney also has experience

in negotiating on your behalf. This can reduce the amount you are found to be at fault, or may eliminate your portion of fault entirely.

Isn't it safe to use a hands-free device while driving? Can this be considered distracted driving?

Hands-free devices are frequently touted as being a safe alternative to using your cell phone while driving. Cars are now equipped with Bluetooth capabilities to make using your cell phone easier without having to physically reach down and pick up the device. Although hands-free devices make using a cell phone safer, they still have the potential to distract you while driving.

Cognitive distractions can be just as dangerous as manual or visual distractions. Answering a phone call about a work-related issue or talking on the phone while emotional can take your mind off the road. This can cause you to miss visual or audio cues about risks on road ahead. These risks may have been obvious and readily seen if the driver is not distracted by the telephone conversation.

The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute reported that using a hands-free device is not significantly safer than holding your cell phone in your hand to talk. Some studies also found that many drivers actually compensated for the harmful effects of using a handheld cell phone while driving. When a hands-free device was implemented and used, these same drivers did not compensate, which ended up making the hands-free device more dangerous.

In general, it is best to pull to a safe place while talking on your cell phone and driving. Then, when you're finished with the conversation, you can safely return to the street and focus completely on operating your vehicle.

I was riding in the car with someone else who kept texting while driving. I asked her to stop, but she didn't. Then we got into a serious car accident. Can I file a claim against her for my injuries?

In Georgia, drivers have the same responsibility to their passengers as they do to everyone else on the road. This means that if you are injured while riding as the passenger in a car where the driver was negligent, you can file a claim against the driver for your injuries.

There is one exception to this rule. The person driving may not be your spouse. Husbands and wives may not sue each other for damages if the other person causes a distracted driving accident in Georgia. This is a law that was created to save the harmony in your marriage and avoid collusion.

Suing a friend can be very difficult. It is a good idea to work with a distracted driving accident lawyer to help file the claim and negotiate on your behalf. This way, you can put a legal representative on your side to manage the claim so that you do not have to cause friction with a person you care about.

It's been a week since my accident and the other driver's insurance company has already offered me a settlement for my claim. Why would I still need to hire an attorney to help me?

When the other driver is at fault in a Georgia distracted driving accident, his insurance company will often try to resolve the case for as little as possible. In general, the earlier an insurance company offers to settle with you, the worse off the settlement will be for you. Here's why:

You cannot know the full extent of your injuries so soon after the crash.

You cannot know the full cost of any treatment that you'll need.

You may have hidden injuries that will not appear until weeks or months after the accident.

Accepting a settlement claim after a short period of time—such as within a week of the crash—can cause you to pay for the mistakes of another person. Because you may not know how much your injuries will cost you, it is impossible to know how much the other person ought to pay.

The insurance company knows this, which is why it works hard to try to get you to accept a settlement quickly. Once you accept a settlement, you cannot reopen your claim. If you discover that treatments are more expensive than initially expected or if you find another injury related to the crash—such as a traumatic brain injury—that hid for weeks or months after your collision, you will be responsible for paying for that on your own.

With help from a Georgia distracted driving attorney, you can be confident that you do not leave any money on the table. A distracted driving attorney knows where to look to find the money available to you. This can help you find compensation that you may not have known you are entitled to receive. An attorney also knows how to negotiate a settlement that will ensure you do not pay for the mistakes of a distracted driver. This way, you do not have to take on the burden of negotiating with an insurance adjuster and you can focus on your recovery instead.

Conclusion

The statistics are frightening to look at. With so many people distracted behind the wheel, your safety is put in jeopardy on the road every day. Although scary, it is important to know what to look for and what to be aware of so that you can do everything in your power to avoid a distracted driving accident in Fayette County.

Although you may take every precaution, we understand how unavoidable most distracted driving accidents are. Drivers come out of nowhere at high speeds not paying attention to where they're going, the traffic signals, or the cars around them. If you have been a victim of a distracted driving accident, you know how quickly a crash can happen when one driver isn't paying attention to where they're going.

After a distracted driving crash, it is crucial that you take the necessary steps to get the help you need. This includes seeking immediate medical attention even if you don't think you're hurt, gathering evidence to support your claim and help prove that the other driver was distracted, and reaching out to a skilled distracted driving accident attorney to represent your case.

There are a number of ways an attorney can help you. Beyond getting you the settlement you deserve, a distracted driving accident attorney can also help you get the peace of mind you need.

Finding the right attorney is not always easy. You need to know what questions to ask and what to look for so that you put the best person possible on your side in your claim. This requires going to the free initial consultation armed with the questions you want answered.

As you begin to interview distracted driving accident attorneys for your claim, be sure to find someone that you not only feel comfortable working with but also feel confident in their abilities. This requires that you find someone specifically experienced and skilled in handling distracted driving accident cases.

The outcome of your case is too important to put at risk. Call and schedule your free consultation with one of the distracted driving accident lawyers at the Law Offices of Shane Smith in Atlanta. We are committed to answering your questions and getting you the results your family needs to recover from such a traumatic event.

Contact Information

We're committed to helping you with your case, and available to answer your questions! *Contact our office today in any one of the following ways:*

- Call our office toll-free at 888-927-6955 or locally at 770-487-8999.
- Fill out our short electronic HYPERLINK “<http://www.shanesmithlaw.com/contact.cfm>” contact form.
- Visit our website at HYPERLINK “<http://www.shanesmithlaw.com>” www.shanesmithlaw.com and chat live with someone who can help.
- Drop by our Atlanta office located at 235 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 400.
- Drop by our Peachtree office located at 263 Highway 74 North, Suite 200.
- Reach out to us on Facebook: HYPERLINK “<http://www.facebook.com/shanesmithlaw>” <http://www.facebook.com/shanesmithlaw>
- Connect with us on Twitter: HYPERLINK “<http://twitter.com/ShaneSmithLaw>” <http://twitter.com/ShaneSmithLaw>

About the Author: Shane Smith

Shane Smith grew up in Fayetteville County and attended Georgia State University and Georgia State’s College of Law, where he graduated Cum Laude in 2000.

Upon being admitted to the Georgia Bar, Smith joined the United State’s Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps. During his time in the Army, he served at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Benning, Georgia.

Following his military service, Shane moved to Peachtree, Georgia, and began working at a large Atlanta personal injury law firm. Four years later, he opened his own law firm with offices in Peachtree and Atlanta where he could focus on the clients and cases he cares about most: those who have been injured in accidents, those who have been injured by another person’s negligence, and those who have been injured by intoxicated drivers.

Shane is admitted to practice law in all courts in Georgia and the military court system. He is also admitted to practice in the Middle District of Georgia.

Shane met his wife while studying at Georgia State University. They have two small children and look forward to raising their family in Georgia.

In addition to this guide, Shane has published legal guides regarding car accident property damage claims, car accident injury claims, and car accidents caused by drunk drivers.

Appendix: How Parents Can Teach Their Kids to Avoid Distracted Driving

Many parents fear the time that they will have to teach their kids how to drive. Thinking about sitting behind the wheel as your kids learn the rules of the road can sound like a daunting task. Then, sending your kids on the road without you for the first time can send shivers down your spine. Who will they share the road with? Will they follow the rules the same way they do when you're in the car next to them?

Teenagers are notorious for thinking that they know everything they need to know about driving. Sometimes, this overconfidence can cause them to make bad decisions while behind the wheel.

Teaching your kids the dangers of driving while distracted by the radio, cell phones, and other passengers in the car is a critical step before sending them out on their own. Here's how you can help your teenager learn just how dangerous it is to drive while distracted:

Set a Good Example Early On

You are your teenage drivers' first teacher. Before they begin to think about being behind the wheel themselves, they will subconsciously learn how to drive a vehicle and appropriate driving behavior from you.

When you are tempted to reach for your cell phone or take your hands off the wheel, it is important to consider the message you will send to your observant child. By focusing on setting a good example early on, you will be a safer driver, and you will train your child to make better decisions while driving too.

When you choose safe driving behavior, such as pulling over to a safe location to make a phone call or look for directions, point this safe driving decision out to your child. This will solidify the lesson and teach them how to make good decisions later in life when they are alone in the car.

Talk To Them Like a Friend

Sometimes, when parents are trying to get a very important point across, they tend to talk down to their teenagers. This can immediately flip a switch and cause a teenager to tune out the message being delivered. If you are worried that this may be the case with your teen, try a different approach.

Instead of demanding your teenagers put down their cell phones or not touch the radio while driving, try talking to them as you would talk to your friend. Don't put them down or make accusations. Instead, praise positive behaviors. If your teen's cell phone rings while driving and he does not reach over to see who is calling, point out how smart it was for him to ignore his cell phone until the drive is over. This will

make your child more receptive to your message and more comfortable having you in the car. When he is driving without you, he'll remember your voice in his head encouraging him to make the right choice.

Enroll Your Child in a Driver's Education Course

In addition to teaching your child how to drive, enroll her in a driver's education class at their school or in the community. These classes are designed to instill smart driving behaviors in teens. Many times, your child will enjoy the class more when taking it together with her friends, leaving her more open to learning smart driving behaviors.

Sending your child to a third party to learn how to drive can also help ease the tension between you and your child. This way, she will be more open and ready to learning smart driving behaviors instead of viewing you, her parent, as the bad guy who is demanding that she not to talk to her friends while operating a vehicle. Your teenage daughter will be more receptive to the lesson of the teacher, who she is less inclined to ignore or show defiance to while driving.

Driver's education classes use public service announcements and scary videos to instill a very real message about how dangerous distracted driving can be. With these messages ingrained in them through visual aids, your children may be less tempted to take dangerous risks while driving for fear of being involved in an accident like the ones they see in the videos or in their textbook.

Consider Investing in Technology

It may sound counterintuitive that you should consider investing in technology to keep your teenager distraction-free while driving, but it may help more than may think.

Developers have created certain programs that can block cell phone reception in a moving vehicle. These applications can eliminate the temptation to reach for a cell phone just to send a quick text or answer a call. Technology that prohibits your child from using his cell phone while driving can help train your teen to put his phone away while he is behind the wheel.

Other technological solutions include a device that requires the driver to put the phone on a dock before the car can be started. After the car is turned on, the phone can only be used via the Bluetooth connectivity.

Although these solutions are not ideal because they can still cause a teenager to be cognitively distracted, they do offer a way to reduce the temptation of using a cell phone while driving.