

Distracted Driving In Nebraska

Driving requires mental, physical, visual and auditory attention. Doing anything but concentrating on driving puts drivers, passengers and other road users at an increased risk of being involved in a crash.

Nebraska is one of 46 states and the District of Columbia that instituted an all driver texting ban. Depending on the state, these laws are either enforced as primary or secondary.¹ In 2015, Nebraska had 4,402 reported distracted driving crashes 12 of these were fatal.² Nationally, in 2014, 3,179 people were killed and 431,000 were injured in distracted driving crashes.

Distracted Driving Statistics

Each day in the United States, more than 8 people are killed and 1,161 injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver.⁴

- In Nebraska in 2015, of the 160 traffic crashes involving cell phone distractions 43 were teen drivers and 117 were other drivers.⁵
- Over the last 10 years, on average, Nebraska drivers aged 15-19 have been involved in 43 cellphone distraction crashes per year.⁶
- On average, Nebraska has had more than 3,600 distracted driving crashes per year over the last 10 years.²

How Does Distracted Driving Affect Nebraska?

Distractions now join alcohol and speeding as leading factors in fatal and serious injury crashes. Distracted driving accounted for approximately 10% of the total traffic crashes in Nebraska for 2015. Over the last three years, the number of Nebraska drivers involved in distracted driving crashes has increased by nearly 20%. There were 4,402 Nebraska drivers involved in distracted driving crashes in 2015 the highest number in the last 10 years.²

Strategies to Reduce Distracted Driving:

Worksite Cell Phone Policy

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of workplace death.⁷ Some employers are going beyond state laws to promote best driving practices. Case studies of companies with a safe driving policy show that crash rates decline.⁸

Primary Enforcement

Nebraska law prohibits the use of a handheld wireless device to read, write, or send communication while operating a motor vehicle. Nebraska joins four states in secondary enforcement of the ban on texting, meaning the driver would not be cited for a violation unless they are charged with another violation or offense. A driver who violates the texting law can be fined \$200 for first offense, \$300 second offense, or \$500 for subsequent offenses in addition to three points against the driver's license.

Observations done in the District of Columbia, New York, and Connecticut (primary enforcement states) conducted up to seven years after bans were implemented showed the rates of driver hand-held cellphone conversations were an estimated 24-76% lower than would have been expected without a ban.⁹ Driver behavior is very responsive to cellphone laws. Texting bans reduced visible texting while driving approximately 60%. Full hand-held device bans reduce the probability of talking on cellphones while driving around 40%.⁹ Studies continue on the effects of primary enforcement on reducing crashes.

High Visibility Cell Phone and Text Messaging Enforcement

Similar to the Click It or Ticket seat belt campaign, high-visibility enforcement along with paid and earned media are deployed around cell phone use and/or texting. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the program Phone in one hand. Ticket in the other. was piloted in Hartford, CT and Syracuse, NY. Hand-held phone use dropped by 32% and 52% respectively. The percentage of drivers observed

manipulating a phone either texting or dialing decreased as well.¹¹

Education

Nebraska along with 35 states and the District of Columbia utilize social media such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to reach targeted groups on a widespread platform. There has been a 125% increase since the 2010 survey when only 16 states responded that they were using these strategies.¹²

Joel Feldman's EndDD.org program is providing presentations to workplaces and schools about distracted driving. This evidence-based presentation is often provided through a volunteer network of the Association of Trial Attorneys across the country. The Nebraska Association of Trial Attorneys participates in this program and provide presentations to interested schools.

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