

DISTRACTED DRIVING PROGRAM AREA BRIEF

BACKGROUND

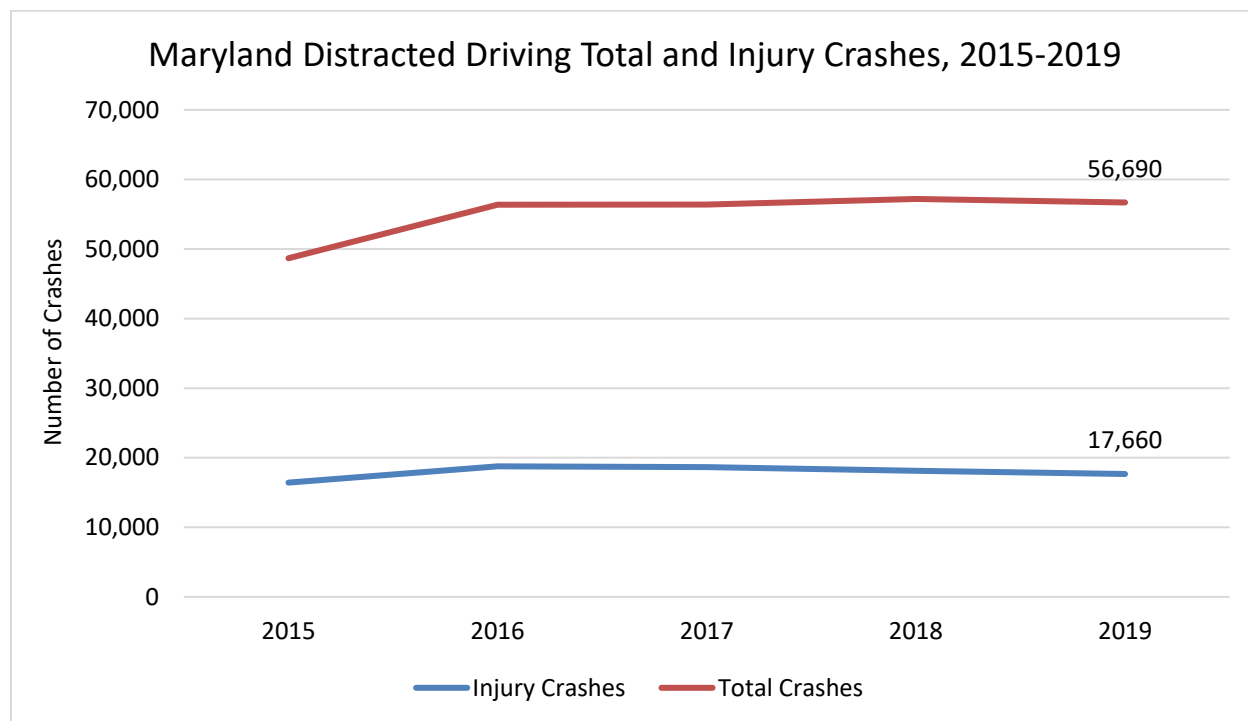
Distracted driving is any activity that diverts a driver's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.

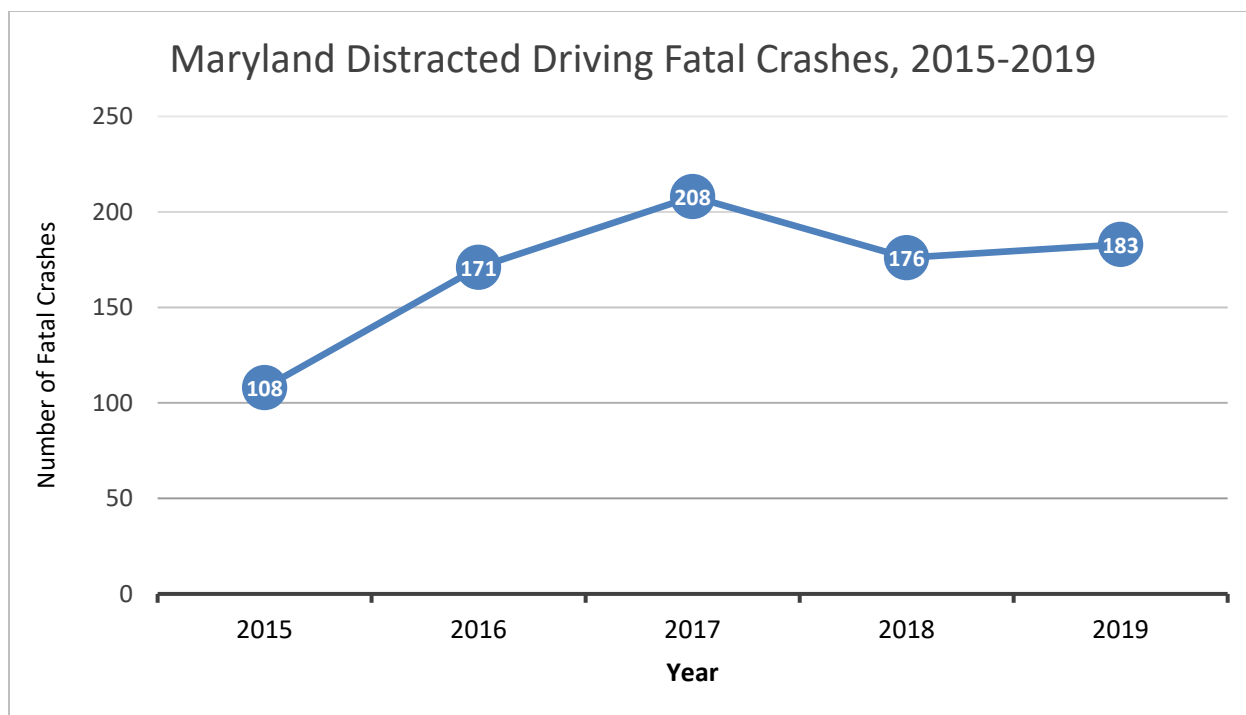
Most distractions involve cognitive and sensory distraction. Just making a call on a hand-held phone alone involves holding, looking at, and touching the phone, dialing, and listening to and thinking about the conversation.

Types of driver distractions:

- Visual – looking at something other than the road.
- Auditory – hearing something not related to driving.
- Manual – manipulating something other than the wheel.
- Cognitive – thinking about something other than driving.

THE FACTS





Distracted driving is defined as: having values of either “Failure to Pay Full Time and Attention” or “Cell Phone in Use” in any of the four available contributing circumstance fields on the Maryland crash form. Due to the broad use of “Failure to Pay Full Time and Attention” by law enforcement and the self-reported nature of “Cell Phone in Use,” Maryland distracted data represents both an over-reporting and under-reporting of the specific types of distraction while driving.

- **Motor vehicle crashes are a huge threat to public health.** Motor vehicle crashes continue to be a leading cause of death in the United States¹. In 2018, approximately 6.7 million crashes were reported; approximately 29 percent resulted in an injury or fatality².
- **The number of distracted driving crashes occurring in Maryland each year is increasing.** On average a total of 55,000 distracted driving crashes have occurred each year from 2015 to 2019. There has been a steady increase in distracted driving crashes from 2015 through 2018 with slight decrease in 2019. Distracted driving contributes to 48 percent of all crashes in Maryland.
- **Injuries and fatalities are high in distracted driving crashes.** Nearly 33 percent of distracted driving crashes resulted in injury or death from 2015 to 2019. On average, approximately 27,000 people were injured or killed per year because of distracted driving.
- **Weekends and afternoons to early evening hours have the highest number of crashes.** Distracted driving crashes were spread consistently throughout the months and the days of the

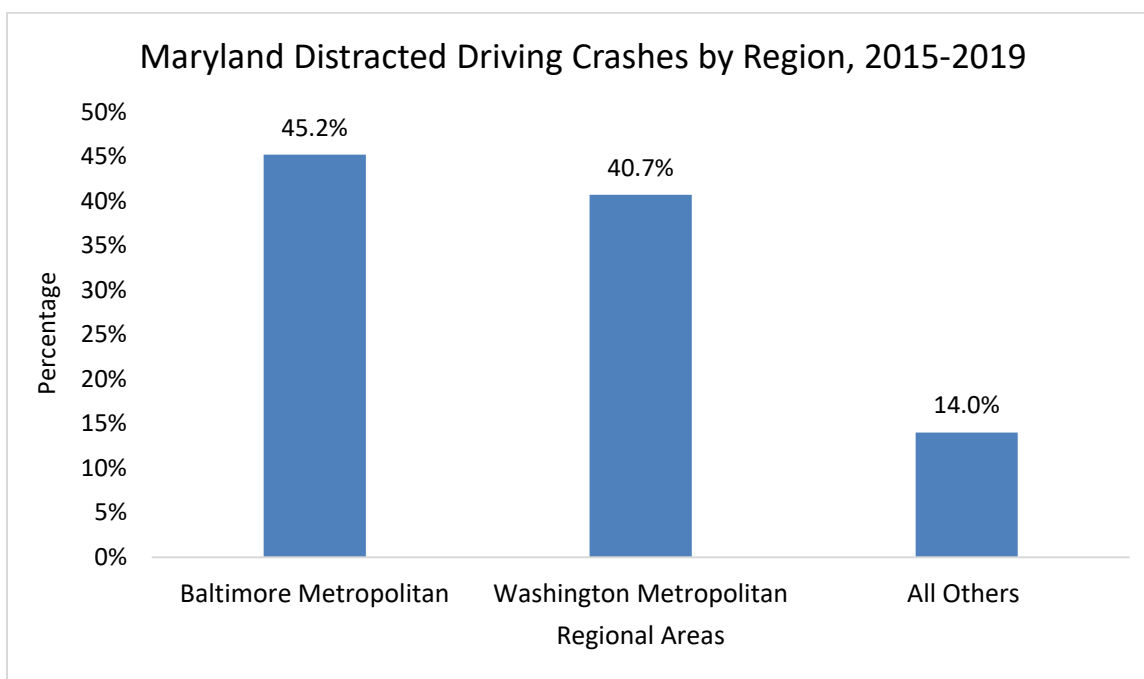
¹ CDC National Vital Statistics Reports – 10 Leading Causes of Death

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Traffic Safety Facts Annual Report Tables, National Statistics 2010-2018

week. However, Fridays showed a slight increase in the number of crashes that occurred, and Sundays experienced the lowest number of distracted driving crashes. However, Saturdays had the highest number of average distracted driving crash fatalities. Approximately 50% of the distracted driving crashes occurred between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

- **Drivers under 30 years old account for approximately 33 percent of all distracted drivers involved in crashes.** Nearly a quarter of the drivers involved in distracted driving crashes were between the ages of 21 and 29. More distracted drivers were males (53 percent).
- **Metropolitan areas have the highest concentration of distracted driving crashes³.** The Baltimore and Washington metropolitan areas accounted for nearly 86 percent of crashes related to distracted driving. However, Prince George's County accounted for 21 percent of the state's distracted driving fatalities.

Approximately 79
percent of
distracted driver
fatalities are male



MARYLAND'S DISTRACTED DRIVING LAWS

Maryland law prohibits the use of a handheld cell phone and texting while driving.

³ Baltimore Metropolitan area is comprised of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard and Queen Anne's Counties, and Baltimore City as designated by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. The Washington Metropolitan Area is defined as Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's Counties as designated by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

- The law states, **“A driver of a motor vehicle that is in motion may not use the driver’s hands to use a handheld telephone other than to initiate or terminate a wireless telephone call or to turn on or turn off the handheld telephone.”**
- First-time offenders face a maximum of an \$83 fine, second-time offenders a maximum of \$140 fine, and third-time offenders a maximum of \$160 fine (all figures include court costs). Points cannot be given unless the offence results in a crash.
- Exceptions to this law are made in the case of emergency calls to: 9-1-1, a hospital, an ambulance service provider, a fire department, law enforcement, or a first aid squad.

Drivers also can be ticketed for writing, sending, or reading a text or electronic message while driving.

- The fine is \$70 and one point, and if the use of the device contributes to a crash, the fine may increase to \$110 and three points.

Jake’s Law:

- A driver that causes serious injury or death while talking on a handheld cell phone or texting may receive a prison sentence of up to three years and a fine up to \$5,000.

MARYLAND’S DISTRACTED DRIVING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

- Maryland has developed a campaign called “Be the Driver” which includes creative and material concerning distracted driving prevention. The campaign’s materials are distributed to Maryland’s traffic safety partners. Outreach is also targeted toward Maryland’s law enforcement community regarding the enforcement of Maryland’s handheld cell phone law.
- Distracted Driving is one of the main components of Maryland’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan, with a specific team of personnel responsible for leading initiatives to reduce distracted driving-related crashes.
- Distracted driving is a pillar to Maryland’s Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) campaign. Information on TZD may be found here – <http://www.towardzerodeathsmd.com/>
- The U.S. Department of Transportation has launched a variety of creative campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving. With the help of numerous safety partners, safety officials have made public outreach to millions of Americans with the important and new Ad Council message that, “One Text or Call Could Wreck It All.”
- For information about Distracted Driving visit: www.distraction.gov.

DISTRACTED DRIVING SAFETY TIPS

Nearly everyone is guilty of some form of distracted driving. In fact, distracted drivers are almost everywhere you look. Here are some good ideas to help you drive more safely:

- **Use your cell phone for emergency situations only.** A cell phone should only be used for emergency purposes, and it's best to pull over safely to the right shoulder to make a call. Hands-free devices can still cause you to miss important visual and audio cues needed to avoid a crash.
- **If you are drowsy, pull off the road.** Drowsiness increases the risk of a crash by four times.
- **You should limit the number of passengers, as well as the level of activity inside the car.** Most states' graduated driver licensing laws prohibit teens from having teenage passengers in the car with them during their early months of driving. Driving with friends can create a dangerous driving environment because novice drivers are focused on their friends rather than the road.
- **Avoid eating while driving.** Being busy is no excuse for distracted driving. Finishing your breakfast on the way to work or school may seem like a time-saver, but it means you are less attentive to the drivers around you. Food spills are a major cause of distraction.
- **Do your multi-tasking outside the car.** Everyone spends a lot of time in their vehicles, and it may seem like the perfect time to get little things done: calling friends, searching for good music, maybe even text messaging. Don't do it. Focus on the road and the drivers around you. Get everything settled before you start driving.

WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT DISTRACTED DRIVING IN MARYLAND

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATION

- Contact: MDOT MVA's Press Information at 410-762-5188.