

Pay Attention at the Wheel!

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Virginia Tech recently released the findings of a study involving real-world driver behaviors. According to the study, nearly 80% of crashes and 65% of near-crashes involved some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event.

The primary cause of driver inattention is distracting activities—not surprisingly, cell phone use is the most common distraction. Dialing while driving is most dangerous, followed by talking or listening.

Other accident-inducing behavior includes drowsiness, reaching for a moving object, reading, and applying makeup.

Drivers who engage frequently in distracting activities are more likely to be involved in an inattention-related crash or near-crash. However, all drivers are at risk because they are often unable to predict when it is safe to look away from the road to multitask.

Centers can significantly reduce the possibility of accidents by reducing the number of distractions they allow while transporting children. Steps you can take include:

- Set policies and allocate resources to create a safety culture. Actively encourage employee participation at all levels.
- Institute a policy forbidding personal cell phone use while transporting children. Require drivers to pull off to the side of the road or into a parking lot to report an emergency or transportation delay.
- Create a clear, comprehensive, and enforceable set of traffic safety policies and communicate them to all employees. Post them throughout your center and discuss them at staff meetings. Offer incentives for sticking to the rules, and point out the consequences of disregarding them.
- Establish a contract with all employees who transport children, whether they drive company or personal vehicles. By signing an agreement, drivers acknowledge understanding of your center's policies regarding driver performance, vehicle maintenance and reporting of moving violations.
- Review all accidents to determine their cause and whether they could have been prevented. Understanding the root causes of crashes, regardless of fault, forms the basis for eliminating them.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.