



## Five Minutes for Safety

### 100 Deadly Days of Summer

**Objective:** Use as summer season approaches to remind employees that the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day not only comprises the busiest time of the year on our roadways, but also results in the greatest numbers of crash fatalities. Reinforce their own roles in avoiding the multitude of impairments that can increase their summertime driving risks.

**Opening:**

I want to start with a few questions for you. First what's notable about the time between Memorial Day and Labor Day?

(Ask for answers)

Well, in addition to nice weather, vacation road trips and cabin weekends, summertime has a somber side. Did you know that the 100 days between Memorial Day and Labor Day are the deadliest period of the year on roadways here in Minnesota and across the nation?

So what do we do about this? Here are a few more questions for you.

- What three things should you ask yourself before you get behind the wheel? And the answer is not "Where are the keys? (Anybody have ideas?) You need to ask yourself: Where are your eyes? Where are your hands? Where is your mind? The answer to each is the same. Fully engaged in driving.
- Do you know the three types of driving impairments, sometimes called distractions? First is visual. That means your eyes are off the road and focused on something else. Second is manual. That means you've taken your hands off the wheel. Whether you're trying to do something or are a confirmed "hand talker," remember to keep those hands on the steering wheel. The third type of driving impairment? Cognitive. Your mind is somewhere else or not fully engaged in driving.
- Distractions that lead to driving impairment come in many forms: Sending a message. Talking on a cellphone (even hands free!). Adjusting your entertainment or navigation system. Eating while driving. Interruption from kids or other passengers. Remember, as the driver you have your life and those of many others in your hands.



## Impairment Facts

As you heard, impairments can take many forms. Here's are a few important things to consider:

- Labor Day may seem like the quieter cousin to more festive Memorial Day and July 4<sup>th</sup>, but over the last decade traffic deaths that weekend have risen each year. Drivers between ages 16 and 25 made up a quarter of the 4,000 deaths, with speed and alcohol – both impairments – the most common factors. And, did you know that Labor Day weekend is the second deadliest holiday of the year, with only Thanksgiving posting more fatalities. Slow down, be alert and put all your attention on driving.
- If you're the host and are serving alcohol, you have an important responsibility. If someone has been drinking, don't let them drive. Make sure your guests get home safe with a sober driver or by spending the night.
- A cellphone in your hand can become the trifecta of driving impairment. Texting while driving impairs you visually, manually and cognitively. It also increases your chances of a crash by 5 times. Remember, hands-free is the law in Minnesota and most other states.
- Driving while impaired by distractions or for other reasons is dangerous enough. It's more so around work zones. Nationally in 2020, 857 people were killed and 44,240 people were injured in work zone crashes. Work zones need your full attention to lane shifts, closures, moving workers and vehicles.
- Speeding is not just about trying to get somewhere faster. It's aggression. It also impairs your ability to drive by raising your odds of losing control of your vehicle, increasing stopping distance and reducing time available to avoid a crash. Crash while traveling at a high rate of speed, and your odds of being seriously injured or dying are higher
- Impaired driving isn't limited to vehicles with wheels. As you launch on your favorite river or lake, remember alcohol is involved in about 30 percent of fatal boat accidents in Minnesota. Drunk boating is drunk driving — designate a sober ride on the water and on the road.

## Impairment Prevention

As a driver, you need to not only avoid becoming impaired yourself, but also stay safe around other drivers who are impaired. Distracted or inattentive driving comes in many forms. Here's what you can reduce risk and stay safer behind the wheel:

- Cell phones — Turn off cell phones, or place them out of reach to avoid the urge to dial or answer. If a passenger is present, ask them to handle calls/texts. When making/receiving a call, ask if the person is driving. If so, ask them to call back at a safer time.
- Music and other controls — Pre-program favorite radio stations for easy access and arrange music (mp3 player/CDs/tapes) in an easy-to-access spot. Adjust mirrors and heat/AC before traveling, or ask a passenger to assist.
- Navigation — Designate a passenger to serve as a co-pilot to help with directions. If driving alone, map out destinations in advance, and pull over to study a map.
- Eating and drinking. Avoid food/beverages while driving. Pull over where it is safe and legal and take a break to eat.
- Children — Teach children the importance of good behavior in a vehicle; do not underestimate how distracting it can be to tend to children while driving.





- Passengers — Speak up to stop drivers from distracted driving behavior.
- Alcoholic beverages and other legal and illegal substances – Make a plan. Figure out how you're going to get home safely before you start celebrating. Plan your safe ride home with a designated driver or hired ride. Remember drunk driving is impaired driving.
- Road rage defense — If you find yourself in a threatening situation while driving, disengage and get out of the way. Stay calm and engaged in your own driving so you can arrive safely. Don't engage or challenge them. Avoid eye contact. Report it to the authorities with vehicle description, license number and location.
- Stay awake — Be well rested before you get behind the wheel. Drivers who get less than five hours of sleep a night are more likely to be involved in a drowsy-driving crash. Being awake for 17 hours is similar to having a BAC of .05%

### Closing reinforcement

I'm going to leave you with two thoughts. First, on average distracted driving contributes to nearly four dozen deaths and many more than life-changing injuries in Minnesota each year. Don't become a statistic. Every time you get behind the wheel – and please share this with the drivers among your family and friends – you must do three things. Keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes on the road and your mind on driving.

Have a safe summer, everyone!

**Sources:** Minnesota Department of Public Safety,  
Office of Traffic Safety  
Minnesota Department of Public Health  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
Centers for Disease Control

