

NTSB MOST WANTED LIST

CRITICAL CHANGES NEEDED TO REDUCE TRANSPORTATION ACCIDENTS AND SAVE LIVES

2014

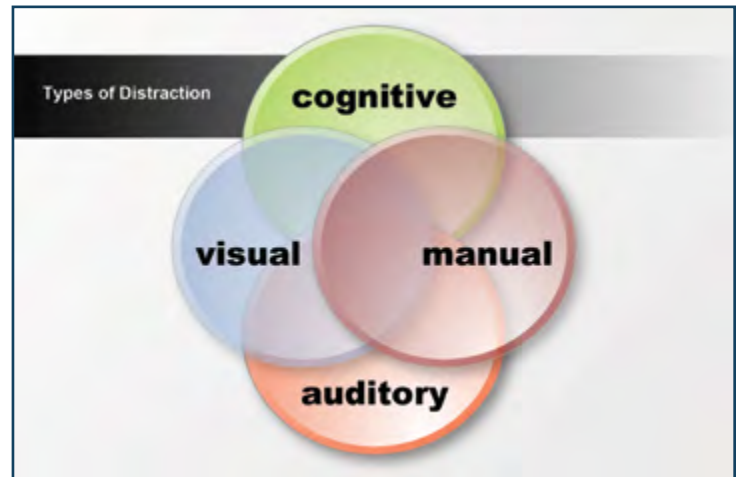
ELIMINATE DISTRACTION IN TRANSPORTATION

What is the Problem?

Every major mode of transportation—highway, aviation, railroad, marine, and pipeline—requires that its operating personnel have well-established and practiced skills to use their equipment safely and effectively. These skills depend upon several human capabilities, such as cognitive attention and decision-making, visual recognition and identification, and manual motor skills for quick and accurate responses. When operating transportation equipment, regardless of its size or class, operators must focus diligently and exclusively on the task of controlling their vehicles within dynamic environments to ensure that they and the public remain safe. With the expansive increase in portable electronic devices (PEDs), including cell phones, messaging and navigation systems, and entertainment devices, as well as the growing development of integrated technologies in vehicles, the NTSB is seeing a disturbing growth in the number of accidents due to distracted operators; often these accidents have deadly consequences.

The safety community has directed considerable interest toward the topic of distracted driving. A 2013 survey conducted by the American Automobile Association's (AAA) Foundation for Traffic Safety identified a number of disturbing trends; for example, nearly 70 percent of drivers reported talking on cell phones while driving in the past 30 days, about 25 percent of drivers admitted to typing text and electronic mail messages while driving, and about 35 percent reported reading text or electronic mail messages while driving. According to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) 2013 report, drivers engaging in visual-manual tasks, such as dialing or texting, increases the risk of a crash by three times. In another AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety 2013 report, researchers found that a driver's level of cognitive distraction is about equal when using either hands-free or hand-held cell phones.

Distraction affects all drivers and operators, whether in a car or truck, an airplane cockpit, a locomotive cab, the bridge of a ship, or a control room for a pipeline system. For example, on August 26, 2011,



Different types of distraction.

an emergency medical services helicopter crashed in Missouri; the pilot, two flight crewmembers, and a patient were killed. The NTSB determined that the helicopter ran out of fuel because the pilot was inattentive and engaged in personal texting. On September 12, 2008, a freight train and commuter train collided head-on in Chatsworth, California, killing 25. The NTSB determined that the commuter train engineer was distracted by text messaging. Other accident investigations and safety studies conducted by the NTSB in all modes of transportation underscore the dangers of using PEDs while operating a highway vehicle, plane, train, ship, or pipeline.

In short, operator distraction due to PED usage is a cultural epidemic that too often has tragic consequences.

What can be done?

The United States needs a cultural shift that prioritizes PED-free transportation operations. To effect and sustain such a change, we need effective laws and regulations, strong and consistent enforcement, and pervasive education. We also need to build a social infrastructure that dissuades distracted operations at all times, starting with new and existing drivers who are the agents of change, extending through their family and community support systems to reinforce appropriate behaviors, to the local and regional educational and enforcement to ensure proper guidance and corrections for behaviors.

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What can be done? *con't...*

While laws and regulations already prohibit PED usage in some operations, such as during commercial flight operations and by on-duty rail operations personnel, these laws and regulations need to be expanded to on-duty marine crewmembers and all motor vehicle drivers. Such laws and regulations set a tone for what will and will not be tolerated when operating planes, trains, ships, pipelines, and vehicles.

NTSB investigations and other studies have revealed, however, that banning PEDs alone does not ensure that every operator devotes the appropriate attention, vigilance, and discipline necessary for safe operations. Education and company policies reinforce laws and regulations by explaining the dangers of distraction and what companies expect from their employees.

For those individuals who choose not to change their behavior, enforcement is a critical component. In 2010, NHTSA funded a demonstration program in Hartford, Connecticut, and Syracuse, New York. These cities conducted extensive high-visibility enforcement of their laws prohibiting talking or texting using a handheld device, after which handheld use dropped 56 percent and 38 percent respectively.

What is the NTSB doing?

The NTSB is addressing this issue through its investigations and advocacy efforts. Since 2003, the NTSB has identified the use of a PED as a cause or contributing factor in accidents and incidents across all transportation modes, and we continually learn of other accidents in which distraction plays a key role. Through our investigations of these events, the NTSB has vigorously advocated for stronger enforcement, education, and laws to eliminate distraction in transportation. Moreover, in every new accident investigation, the NTSB closely examines the operating environment to determine what role the use of a PED may have played.

In 2012, the NTSB held a 1-day forum to examine countermeasures that can mitigate distracted driving behaviors. In 2013, the NTSB issued a Safety Alert, *Avoid Nonoperational Use of Portable Electronic Devices (PEDs) Before and During Flight*. We continue to raise this issue and call for action through a variety of events and mediums, including our annual Youth Open House and Transportation Education Day. This event brings together youth leaders, government officials, safety advocates, and industry representatives to raise awareness of teen driver safety issues, particularly distracted driving. By raising awareness through accident investigations and advocacy, the NTSB seeks to expedite the much-needed cultural shift to PED-free transportation.

Critical changes needed to reduce transportation accidents and save lives



National
Transportation
Safety Board

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in other modes of transportation - railroad, highway, marine and pipeline. The NTSB determines the probable cause of the accidents and issues safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, the NTSB carries out special studies concerning transportation safety and coordinates the resources of the Federal Government and other organizations to provide assistance to victims and their family members impacted by major transportation disasters.

