

# Driving Distraction Free

## Eyes on the Road, Hands on the Wheel

Driving is a very demanding task, yet almost all drivers try to do other things while behind the wheel. The Canada Safety Council warns drivers always to give the driving task their top priority.

Ever tried to switch a CD or find a radio station while driving? Ever spilled coffee in the car? Ever been so caught up in a conversation that you missed your turn - or worse, went through a red light? Ever seen other drivers reading the paper, or grooming themselves in the rear view mirror? Almost all of us have either observed or been guilty of multi-tasking behind the wheel.

"Multi-tasking behind the wheel has become very common," comments Canada Safety Council president Emile Therien. "Drivers eat, use laptop computers, talk on the phone, and try to stop their kids from fighting. Any distraction can be dangerous if it takes your attention off the road."

Driving is one of the most demanding tasks we do, says Therien, yet a lot of drivers treat it as a secondary activity. He warns that unless you always give the driving task your top priority, you're bound to have a mishap sooner or later - and it could be a serious one. Driver distraction in its various forms contributes to about nine per cent of serious or fatal crashes.

Our society has to a great extent condoned multitasking while driving. Most vehicles have cup holders. Many also have complex in-vehicle systems for navigation and entertainment. Fast food drive-throughs encourage "dash-board dining." Drivers discipline their kids, argue with passengers, use cell phones and other electronic devices, groom themselves, and even read while on the road.

The Canada Safety Council offers drivers a few tips to minimize distractions and focus on the driving task:

- Always keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel.
- Ensure all children are properly buckled up.
- Consume food and beverages when the car is safely stopped.
- Review driving directions before you start.
- Avoid involved conversations with passengers.
- Use a hands-free device with your cell phone, keep conversations short, and never take notes while driving.

Source: Canada Safety Council - [www.safety-council.org](http://www.safety-council.org)