

# Focus on the road



MANITOBA  
PUBLIC INSURANCE

## Focus on the road

The most important thing to think about while driving is ... driving.

Distracted driving means any activity that diverts your attention from the road. Being distracted, even for just a few seconds, is all it can take to cause a fatal crash.

And one of the most dangerous distractions is using a hand-operated electronic device, such as a cellphone, smartphone or tablet, while driving. In Manitoba, it's against the law to use these devices for any reason behind the wheel including texting, emailing, scrolling through playlists, talking, adjusting a GPS route or checking for notifications. This includes while stopped in traffic or at a light.

If you're caught, you'll receive a **three-day licence suspension** for a first offence and a seven-day suspension for subsequent offences. Upon conviction, you will also receive a **\$672 fine** and **five demerits**.

Learn how avoiding distractions and focusing and other road users safe.

A young woman with dark hair is shown from the chest up, sitting in the driver's seat of a car. She is looking forward and slightly to the right, holding a black mobile phone to her ear with her left hand. Her right hand is on the steering wheel. The background is a blurred view of a road with other vehicles, suggesting she is in traffic. The overall lighting is bright, indicating daytime.

**One in three deaths on  
Manitoba roads involves  
a distracted driver.\***

\* Source: Traffic Accident Report Data, 2013-2017

## The distracting facts

Tragedy can occur in a split second when drivers allow their focus to be diverted from the road. Trying to concentrate on two things at once is risky behavior for every driver and can prove deadly — anywhere at any time.

### Each year, on average, in Manitoba:

- **25** people are **killed** in collisions linked to distracted driving.\*
- More than **3,500** people are **injured** in distracted driving collisions annually, nearly 150 of them seriously.\*\*
- Over **11,800** distracted drivers are involved in **collisions**.\*
- Approximately **4,600** drivers are **convicted** for using a hand-held electronic device while driving.\*\*



**You are four times more likely to be in a crash if you talk on your phone while driving, even while using a hands-free device.\*\*\***

\* Source: Traffic Accident Report Data, 2014-2018

\*\* Source: Driver Licensing System, Manitoba Public Insurance

\*\*\* Source: National Safety Council White Paper, 2012



## Common distractions

Distractions can be anything that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel or your mind off the job of driving. Texting while driving, for example, is extremely dangerous because it does all three.

However, anything that takes your focus off the road can be unsafe. Even hands-free, voice-activated tasks reduce your attention to the road for up to 27 seconds after the task is complete. At 40 km/h, that is the distance of three football fields.

Distractions can happen both inside and outside your vehicle. Some of the most common are:

### In your vehicle

- smartphones or tablets
- GPS navigation and other technology features
- passengers — including pets
- adjusting your audio systems, climate control or other devices
- eating, drinking and smoking
- personal grooming

### Outside your vehicle

- nearby activities
- commercial signs
- domestic animals and wildlife
- emergency situations, construction and accidents



## The costs of distracted driving

Distractions aren't just dangerous. In Manitoba it's illegal to use, or even check, a hand-operated electronic device, such as a cellphone, smartphone or tablet, while driving – unless it is safely anchored in a hands-free mode.

Demerits move a driver down the Driver Safety Rating (DSR) scale. Your position on the DSR scale depends on your driving record. Driving safely moves you up the scale and saves you money, while high risk drivers move down the scale and pay more.

In addition, you can be charged with offences such as driving imprudently, careless driving or dangerous driving. These can result in fines, demerits and other driving interventions. You can also be charged with whatever specific offence the distraction caused you to commit (e.g., failing to yield).

**Drivers convicted of violating this law receive a driver's licence suspension, \$672 fine and five demerits.**



## Tips for avoiding distractions

Now that you know the dangers, consequences and costs associated with distracted driving, here are some tips to avoid potentially deadly distractions.

### Stay off your phone

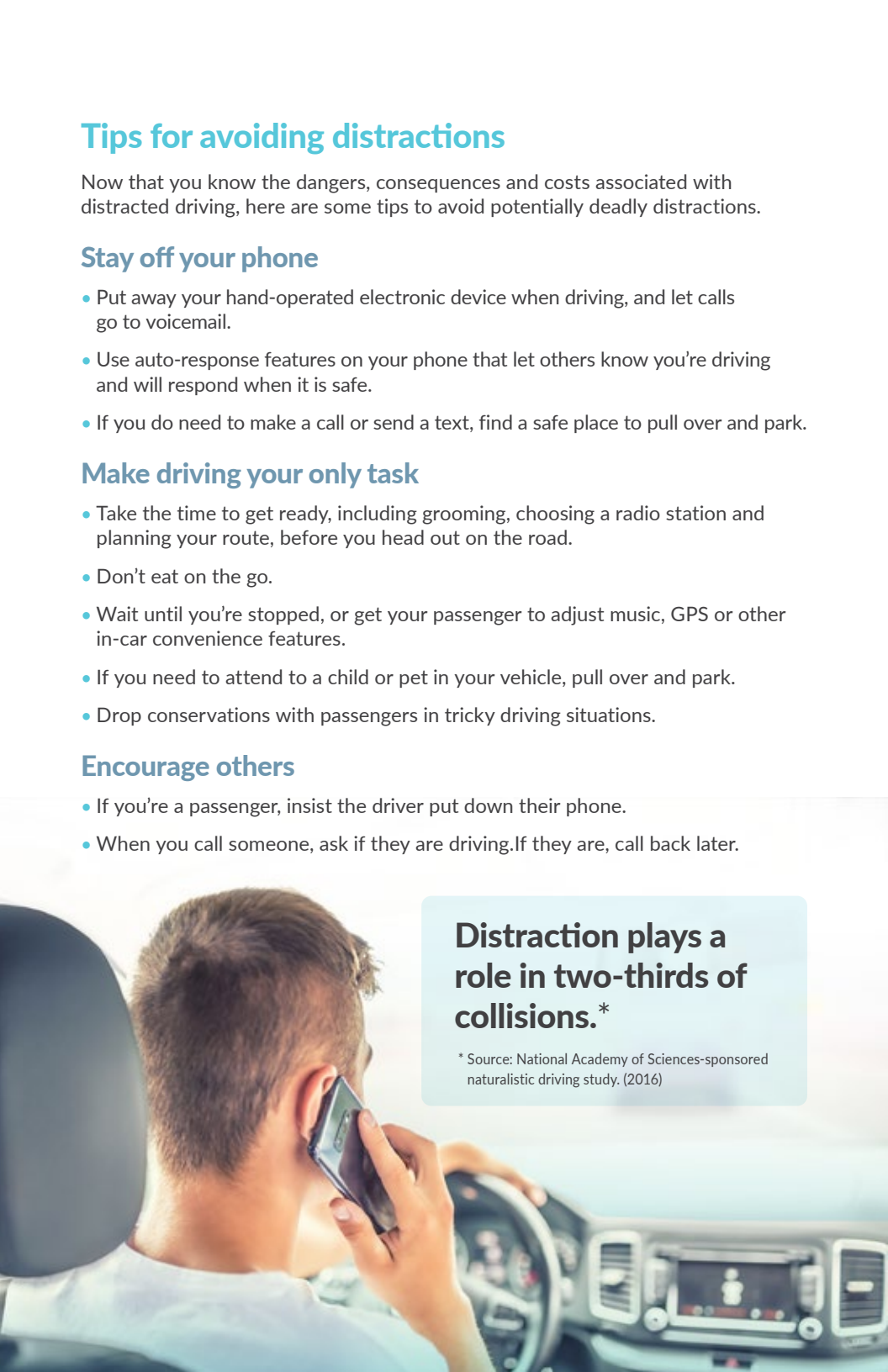
- Put away your hand-operated electronic device when driving, and let calls go to voicemail.
- Use auto-response features on your phone that let others know you're driving and will respond when it is safe.
- If you do need to make a call or send a text, find a safe place to pull over and park.

### Make driving your only task

- Take the time to get ready, including grooming, choosing a radio station and planning your route, before you head out on the road.
- Don't eat on the go.
- Wait until you're stopped, or get your passenger to adjust music, GPS or other in-car convenience features.
- If you need to attend to a child or pet in your vehicle, pull over and park.
- Drop conversations with passengers in tricky driving situations.

### Encourage others

- If you're a passenger, insist the driver put down their phone.
- When you call someone, ask if they are driving. If they are, call back later.

A photograph showing the back of a person's head and shoulders as they sit in the driver's seat of a car. They are holding a smartphone to their ear with their right hand, engaged in a conversation. The car's steering wheel and dashboard are visible in the foreground, and the background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor scene.

**Distraction plays a role in two-thirds of collisions.\***

\* Source: National Academy of Sciences-sponsored naturalistic driving study. (2016)

## Use driver-assist features safely

Even good drivers make mistakes or get momentarily distracted. Driver-assist safety features can help. Just remember that these features have limitations and are no substitute for an attentive driver.

## Stay focused. Stay safe.

When you're behind the wheel, your focus should be on driving – eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, mind on the task at hand.

Potential distractions are everywhere, but it's up to you to not let those distractions draw your attention away from the road.

Your life and the lives of others could depend on it.

**To learn more about safe driving habits, visit [mpi.mb.ca](http://mpi.mb.ca).**





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