

Distraction by Mobile Devices Causes More and More Accidents

Difficulty:



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Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report was about how distraction by the use of mobile devices causes a variety of types of accidents. What types of accidents were mentioned? Does this type of distraction affect only people who are driving? What solution is being proposed in the US? Why is this necessary?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = What types of accidents were mentioned? Does this type of distraction affect only people who are driving? What solution is being proposed in the US? Why is this necessary?

1. What were the different type of accidents mentioned in the report?

- Road.
- Rail.
- Air.
- Boat.
- Pedestrian.

2. For each of the above, where possible, what actual incidents were mentioned in the report?

- Road: 2002, new driver in Maryland was phoning while driving, crossed into oncoming traffic, 5 people died.
- Rail: 2008, in California, engineer was texting, train missed a red light, hit another train, 25 people died.
- Air: 2009, 2 pilots were on their laptops, overflow destination by 160kms.
- Boat: 2010, crew member on a tug was busy on cell phone/ laptop, crashed into another boat, 2 Hungarian tourists died.
- Pedestrian: no specific incidents mentioned but 116 pedestrian crashes 2004 - 2011.

Do any of these facts surprise you and why?

3. What is the National Transportation Safety Board proposing and why?

- Nationwide ban on the use of portable electronic devices while driving.
- At the moment there's no national policy: different states have different levels of restrictions on texting or talking on the phone while driving.

- Driver distraction caused over 3,000 deaths in 2010, 9% of total road deaths.

4. What facts did we learn in the report about pedestrian crashes?

- They happen because the people are wearing headphones.
- They get hit by cars or trains.
- There were 116 pedestrian crashes from 2004-2011.
- 3 times as many happened in the last 2 years as the first two years between these dates (i.e. incidents are dramatically increasing).
- Increase is related to increase in use of MP3 players and other devices using headphones.
- 70% of the pedestrians died.
- Over 66% (2 thirds) were male, under 30.
- Of those most were 15-24 years old.
- One third of drivers had sounded their horn to warn pedestrian.
- Over 50% involved trains.

The report said that "The proposal by the NTSB would not ban emergency uses or the use of what it calls "devices designed to support the driving task." Which devices do you think they are talking about? (*GPS devices*)

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Mobile Devices and You.

1. Which mobile devices do you own? (phone, smartphone, MP3, laptop, netbook, iPad, other tablet, portable DVD player...) How often do you use these outside of your home? Where do you use them mostly? Have you ever used any of these while driving? If so, have you ever come close to having an accident as a result? Do you know of anyone who has had or caused an accident because they were using a mobile phone while driving? Do you listen to music on headphones while walking or cycling? Why could this be dangerous?
2. Some people say that using blue tooth /voice recognition to control a device in car does not reduce the risk of having an accident. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
3. What laws exist in your country about the use of mobile devices while driving? What are the penalties if you are caught? (loss of points, fines, both...) Do you agree with these laws? Are the laws properly enforced? Do people obey the laws? Should the laws be stricter/ less strict? Why?
4. Do you talk on your phone on public transport? If so, do you talk normally or more quietly than usual, i.e. do you consider your fellow travelers? What is your attitude to people who talk loudly enough for everyone to hear their conversation? Does it bother you or not? Why?
5. Some countries are now also banning the use of radar detectors in cars. Do you think this is a good idea? Why/ why not? Do you think this move is really designed to force drivers to slow down or is it to get more money in fines? Which effect is more likely, in your opinion?

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Accidents.

1. Have you ever been in a transport accident? Has anyone in your family, or a friend? If yes, describe what happened. How was the accident caused? Were people hurt? How much damage was caused to the vehicles? If none of these apply, think of an accident you have seen on TV or in a movie, or have a look on YouTube, where there are videos of all kinds of accidents, and describe what happened.
Have you ever had or seen anyone having or almost having a "pedestrian crash"? What happened?
2. For each type of accident from the report (car and truck, train, airplane, boat, pedestrian) make a list of things people should do and not do in order to prevent accidents. Compare your list with that of a partner or the others in your group. (*think about avoiding the causes of accidents in the report, maintenance of the vehicle, training etc.*)
3. What other kinds of accidents can you think of, maybe that you have seen really happening or on TV or in a film? What and who did they involve? (*Some examples might be: trees falling on things, buildings collapsing, people swept away by storm waves, people falling off chairs, ladders, roofs, horses etc., cutting yourself with a knife, chainsaw accidents....*)
Have you personally ever had any of these accidents? What happened? Did you have to go hospital, the doctor? Was it expensive or did you have insurance, free medical cover? Do you have any permanent damage (scars, soreness, stiffness, lost limbs, lost mobility, etc.) as a result of the accident? Has it affected your attitude to the activity involved (e.g. riding a horse, using a chainsaw, going up a ladder...)? Or, how do you think having such an accident would affect people's attitude to that activity?

Audioscript

A federal safety agency wants to send a message to all drivers in the United States: keep your attention on the road. The National Transportation Safety Board has called for a nationwide ban on the use of portable electronic devices while driving. The proposal by the NTSB would not ban emergency uses or the use of what it calls "devices designed to support the driving task."

Across the country, different states have different levels of restrictions on texting or talking on the phone while driving.

The government linked driver distraction to more than 3000 deaths in 2010. Those represented about nine percent of all road deaths that year.

Cars and trucks are not the only vehicles where phones and other devices can cause distractions. The NTSB points to accidents like a train crash in California in 2008. One of the engineers was texting and ran through a red signal and into another train. That crash killed twenty-five people.

In two thousand nine, two airline pilots became distracted by their personal laptops during a flight. They flew 160 kilometers past the city where they were supposed to land.

In 2010, two Hungarian tourists died in a boat crash on the Delaware River in Philadelphia. Investigators said a crew member on a tug boat had repeatedly been paying attention to a cell phone and laptop computer.

2012 marks ten years since the NTSB handled its first investigation involving distraction from a wireless device. In two thousand two a new driver talking on the phone crossed into opposing traffic on a road in Maryland. The car turned over. Five people were killed.

Almost everyone knows about the risks of distracted driving. But what about distracted walking - people who get struck by cars or trains while wearing headphones? A new report says the United States had 116 headphone-related pedestrian crashes from 2004 to 2011. Three times as many of these happened in the last two years as in the first two years. The researchers say the increase over time closely follows the rise in popularity of MP3 music players and other devices that use headphones.

Seventy percent of the crashes killed the pedestrian. More than two-thirds of them were male and under the age of thirty. The largest number were age fifteen to twenty-four.

The operators of almost a third of the vehicles reported having sounded their horn to warn the pedestrian. More than half of the accidents involved trains.

I'm Faith Lapidus. And I'm Christopher Cruise. Join us again next week for THIS IS AMERICA in VOA Special English.