

North Dakota State University

Distracted Driving

I. Introduction

Deadly crashes involving drivers distracted by text messaging and other activities highlight a growing danger on the roads nationwide. These activities cause drivers to take their eyes off the road and at least one hand off the steering wheel, endangering themselves and others. Therefore, the intent of these guidelines is to establish proper safety procedures/policy and practices, as well as to promote and provide for a safer environment for students, faculty and staff.

II. Purpose

To reduce the risk of a work-related injury or death by maximizing personal safety while driving.

III. Goals

To ensure that all faculty, staff and students know and understand the safe operating procedures/policy involved with distracted driving.

IV. General Information

Distracted driving activities that could divert your attention away from the primary task of driving and shall be restricted include:

1. Visual – taking your eyes off the road
 - a. Text messaging
 - b. Dialing a phone
 - c. Looking at other occupants in the vehicle
 - d. Reading map/directions, newspaper
 - e. Looking for an address
 - f. Watching a video
2. Manual – taking your hands off the wheel
 - a. Text messaging
 - b. Dialing and talking on the phone
 - c. Adjusting the radio/CD
 - d. Adjusting other vehicle controls
 - e. Retrieving object from the floor/other location
 - f. Eating or drinking
 - g. Grooming
 - h. Smoking and related activities
 - i. Attending to a pet
3. Cognitive – taking your mind off driving
 - a. Text messaging
 - b. Dialing and talking on the phone
 - c. Dealing with personal problems
 - d. Inattentiveness
 - e. Feeling fatigue – if you are tired, don't drive. Pull over and rest.

V. The Law

North Dakota State employees shall not engage in text messaging while driving a state government fleet vehicle.

1. The operator of a motor vehicle that is part of traffic may not use a wireless communications device to compose, read, or send an electronic message.
 - a. "Traffic" means operation of a motor vehicle while in motion or for the purposes of travel on any street or highway and includes a temporary stop or halt of motion, such as at an official traffic-control signal or sign. The term does not include a motor vehicle that is lawfully parked.
 - b. "Electronic message" means a self-contained piece of digital communication that is designed or intended to be transmitted between physical devices. The term includes e-mail, a text message, an instant message, a command or request to access a worldwide web page, or other data that uses a commonly recognized electronic communications protocol. Per North Dakota statute, the term also includes:
 1. Reading, selecting, or entering a telephone number, an extension number, or voice mail retrieval codes and commands into an electronic device for the purpose of initiating or receiving a telephone or cellular phone call or using voice commands to initiate or receive a telephone or cellular phone call;
 2. Inputting, selecting, or reading information on a global positioning system device or other navigation system device;
2. This section does not apply if a wireless communications device is used solely for obtaining emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency, or serious traffic hazard or to prevent a crime about to be committed, in the reasonable belief that an individual's life or safety is in immediate danger, or in an authorized emergency vehicle while in the performance of official duties.
3. **This law also applies to all NDSU employees, who during work time are using their personal vehicles to conduct state business.**

VI. NDSU Policy/Procedure

In order to reduce the risks associated with distracted driving, it is the policy of NDSU, and along with our participation in the North Dakota State Risk Management Program, to prohibit employees from using cell phones (including hands free) or any other mobile device while operating a vehicle on state business, whether the vehicle is in motion or stopped at a stop sign or traffic signal. This includes, but is not limited to, answering or making phone calls, engaging in phone conversations, and reading or responding to emails, instant messages, social media or text messages.

If the driver needs to use their cell phone while in a vehicle being used for state official business, they must pull over safely to the side of the road or another safe location and put the vehicle in park. Additionally, drivers should:

1. Consider turning off, putting on silent or vibrate cell phones or mobile devices before starting the vehicle.
2. Consider modifying your voice mail greeting to indicate that you are unavailable to answer calls or return messages while driving.
3. Inform others that this policy is in place as an explanation of why calls may not be returned immediately.

Driving is a privilege, and not a right. Be careful so you can keep that privilege.