

PREVENTING DISTRACTED DRIVING

*Maintaining Focus Behind
the Wheel of a School Bus*



OUR THANKS!

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N.Y.A.P.T.

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Today We Will Discuss...



- Dangers of Distraction While Driving
- Another Aspect Of Distraction For The Professional Driver
- Concentration
- Distraction Prevention For The School Bus Driver

Statistics Demonstrate a Significant Problem...

- Ten percent of fatal crashes, 15 percent of injury crashes, and 14 percent of all police-reported motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2015 were reported as distraction-affected crashes.
- In 2015, there were 3,477 people killed and an estimated additional 391,000 injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.
- Nine percent of all drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crashes.
- In 2015, there were 551 non-occupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, and others) killed in distraction-affected crashes.

Let's discuss distraction / a little more detail...

Two Types of Driver Distraction



1. Internal:

Things we think about, feel, experience inside our body and mind.

2. External:

Anything outside our body that draws our attention, other than the task we are directly performing.

Group Activity

In your group make a list of things that could distract you while doing your job:

- 1. At home before coming to work*
- 2. At work before leaving on the route*
- 3. During loading and unloading*
- 4. Driving on the route*
- 5. Parking the bus at the garage*



Write your list on the flip chart paper!

In This Next Video...



- You will see a school bus doing what school bus drivers do all over the country, every day...
- After watching the video, we will discuss how this could have been prevented...



Pitfalls of Multi-tasking

- The human brain cannot perform two tasks at the same time.
- Our brain handles tasks sequentially, depending on the priority each is given in our minds.
- When we attempt to perform several tasks all at once, we are unable to do any of them well.



The Overloaded Brain



- Our brain is bomb-barded by too much input – seeing and hearing – throughout our day.
- Multi-tasking has become a way of life.
- When we are overloaded, our skills which allow us to refocus, are not as sharp!

The Brain Filters Information

- The brain filters in sequential order
- Multi-tasking causes information to come at us simultaneously, reducing the ability to focus on each
- Our brain filters the less important information out - prioritizes



When Filtering the Brain Prioritizes



- We subconsciously prioritize which to focus on and in what order.
- Not all information can be focused on simultaneously and some is lost.
- When this happens, we are not aware of information being filtered out.
- However, the “circumstances of the day” can change the order of priority!

Priorities Re-order Your Responses

- Example: you are stopping to unload students, a student cries out and you are monitoring traffic all at the same time.
- Your brain will filter, prioritize and respond as follows:
 1. *Stop the bus*
 2. *Check on the student*
 3. *Continue to monitor traffic*
- Your brain automatically assesses the student crying out to be the critical task, and responds to it.
- When we experience distractions in a rapid succession that are all nearly equal in priority – we lose some of them all together.

The Circumstances Can Change the Prioritization

- In this scenario, your brain automatically assesses the student crying out to be the critical task, and responds to her/him.
- Remember the “circumstances of the day” we talked about earlier?
 - *What If earlier you had received information of a suspicious person at the bus stop?*
 - *How might this change your response order?*
- It depends heavily on the situation – but your brain is constantly aware of all this situational criteria.

Think About Loading and Unloading

- When prioritizing things– we lose some information all together
- When things are nearly equal in priority we cannot afford to lose any part of the process
- The most dangerous task we perform is loading and unloading students
- If we begin to think about the process of loading and unloading, we realize that the brain is experiencing input in rapid succession – seemingly simultaneously
- Remaining focused is critical



Group Activity



- In your group, specifically identify a “piece” of information your brain might receive during the process of loading or unloading students.
- Make a list on your flip chart paper and hang it in your area when you Are done.
- You will have approximately 10 minutes – work quickly please!

Driving Is An Act Of Concentration!

- Dangers of driving distracted are well documented.
- School Bus Drivers are not exempt!
- School Bus Driver's responsibilities to students and families are enormous.
- There is a lot at stake...



A School Bus Driver's Concentration Shifts Constantly

- Your brain is focusing and refocusing all day long
- In the process your brain prioritizes and does not respond to many things. It sees but does not register.
- You may be looking right at something but not see it and not react appropriately.
- The National Safety Council calls this phenomenon, "*Inattention Blindness*".



School Bus Drivers are *NOT* Exempt

This could happen to any one of us!

- Saying, "I would never do that." really is not the reality – it is how our brain works
- You can't control it
- Awareness will help to prevent the impacts of distraction on the safety of our students

7 Tips for Maintaining Concentration While Driving...

1. Stay away from cell phones
2. Make adjustments before you begin – adjust mirrors, temperature, radio, seat etc.
3. Verbalize (out loud) what you are doing that requires concentration
4. Safely pull over if students demand your attention
5. Get adequate rest before driving
6. Eat before driving - not during
7. Stay hydrated

Another Aspect of Distraction

- As professional drivers – it's not all about us
- Defensively it is about other motorists too
- Statistics show that drivers spend more than half of their time behind the wheel distracted from driving the vehicle



The Drivers You Come in Contact With Are Distracted too!



- Distraction contributes to more than 5,000 traffic fatalities each year
- Passengers, eating, and in-car technologies can also cause distractions – it's not just texting and phone calls
- Distracting events include "latency". Texting while stopped at a traffic light can negatively affect full driving engagement once the light turns green for an average of 27 seconds after you've stopped texting.

It is Impossible to Drive Defensively While Distracted

- Several studies believe that distracted drivers pose a greater threat than drunk drivers!
- Since statistics show that 50% of all drivers are distracted - assume that every driver is distracted.
- Pedestrians, bicyclists too!
- How tragic for two drivers who are both distracted to meet at an intersection!!



SPIDER

- Spider: A Framework for Understanding Driver Distraction
 - *Strayer & Fisher, Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst Human Factors, Vol 58, No.1 February 2016*
- Developed acronym to combat distracted driving
- Defensive driving requires actively engaging in a complex series of tasks...SPIDER

- **S**can for potential threats
- **P**redict where those threats will come from
- **I**dentify actual threats
- **D**ecide whether to act and what action to take
- **E**xecute appropriate
- **R**esponses to those threats

Defensive Precautions for Sharing the Road with Distracted Motorists

- Distracted drivers behave similar to drunk drivers
- Watch for signs of other motorists being distracted:
 - *Weaving in and out of their lane*
 - *Looking down at a cell phone*
 - *Body movement in and out of the drivers compartment*
 - *Erratic braking*
 - *Speed that doesn't coincide with traffic flow*
 - *Slowing down with no logical explanation*
 - *Eating, drinking, using make-up, brushing hair, looking at a map etc.*
- Use evasive action to avoid them on the road

Awareness is the Key to Preventing the Dangerous Impacts of Distraction



- Obviously school bus drivers can't stop doing multiple things
- Awareness is a great tool to combat distraction and dangers of multi-tasking.
- By being aware of the potential for missing something critically important to safety – we will prepare for prevention.
- Check and double check...

Distraction Prevention - Summary



**There is a lot riding
with you – stay focused!**

- *Stop the bus in a safe place to deal with distractions inside the bus*
- *Know the route – reduce dependency on the route sheet*
- *Drive defensively – recognize a distracted driver around you and avoid interaction with them*
- *Get proper amounts of rest and eat a balanced diet.*
- *Eliminate cell phone or other technology use while driving*



Thank You For a Great Training!



Bibliography

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