

Distracted Driving -- Conference Summary

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Highway Safety North
International Conference on
Toronto, ON
October 5, 2005

Overview

- What is distracted driving – definition
- How risky is distracted driving – data, research
- Awareness and awareness programs for distracted driving
- Technology and distracted driving
- Legislation, regulation, and enforcement
- Where do we go from here – priority needs and responsibilities
- Concluding comments

Definition – What is Distracted Driving?

- Diversion of attention from driving
- Because driver temporarily focusing on non-driving object, task, event, or person
- Which reduces awareness, decision-making, or performance
- Leading to increased risk of crashes, near-crashes, or corrective action

Definition – implications

- Exclude pre-existing conditions – alcohol, drugs, fatigue, medical, psychological – BUT influenced by them
- Affected by age, other personal characteristics
- Affected by driving conditions and situations
- Not outcomes, only risk
- Need different definitions for different audiences
 - media and general public
 - research

Risks of distracted driving

- What don't we know that we need to know about distracted driving risks?
- ALMOST EVERYTHING!
including ...
- Relative risk of different distractors
- Protective effects
- Cost burden of distracted driving crashes
- Driver knowledge and attitudes
- How to motivate behavioral change

Data needs

- Exposure data – distractors in driving
- Crash data
 - technology in use?
- Pre-crash data
 - technology use
 - driver activity

Data types

- Observational studies (like 100-car)
- Simulation – track – on-road
- On-scene crash investigations
(police report usefulness limited)
- Black boxes
- Qualitative data – focus groups, etc.

Ideal data characteristics

- Uniform variables, definitions, methods
- Accessible, available

Awareness and education

- Awareness: attention and understanding
- Education: motivate safe actions

Awareness and education goals

- Define distracted driving
- Raise profile
- Inform of consequences
 - compare with other risks (like DWI)
- Motivate safe actions

Awareness and education methods

- Positive messages
- Social norming – “join the majority”

Awareness and education targets

- Youth
- Seniors
- High risk
- Employers
- “Influencers” (children, peers)

Awareness and education evaluation

- Surveys – awareness, knowledge, recall, attitudes
- Focus groups
- Controlled studies (fleets)
- Observations ??
- Crash data ??

Technology

- Telematics and other potentially distracting technology developing very rapidly
 - both in-vehicle and nomadic
- No satisfactory methods to assess distraction potential of current or emerging technology
- Critical to refine current methods, develop new ones
- Need cooperative government-industry strategies

Technology issues

- Time – industry development runs ahead of research (performance standards)
- Industry includes electronics as well as auto; OE and aftermarket
- Technology synergies and side effects
- Technology effects on different user groups
- Standards/guidelines should not limit innovation
- Performance standards needed eventually – MOU?
- Interim standards/guidelines (the perfect is the enemy of the good)

Technology and drivers

- User guidelines on technology
 - ratings, labels
- User training?

Technology to reduce risk

- ACC, lane departure, collision warning
 - behavioral adaptation?
 - “no hands, no feet ... no brain?”
- How to fund research, implementation?

Legislation, regulation, enforcement

- Current legislation not adequate, but ...
- Address distraction or performance?

Cell phone laws

- Total ban: little support
- Hand-held: popular, but little basis in research
- Laws don't deal with other emerging telematics (industry moving very fast)

General driving laws

- “Careless driving” laws often too severe
- Specific consequences already can be charged (lane violations, traffic controls)

Effective enforcement

- Well-written laws
- Minimal burden on police
- Judicial support

New laws, regulations, policies?

- Youth – in GDL
- Safety ratings, labels for aftermarket telematics
- Standards for aftermarket telematics
- Employer policies
- Insurance sanctions or incentives
- Consistent police accident report data

Priority needs and responsibilities

- Research and data
 - how big is the problem
 - exposure data
 - active safety devices in vehicles
 - evaluate existing legislation
 - summarize and synthesize current info
 - TIRF, TRB

Priority needs and responsibilities

- Public awareness
 - including media, driver ed ...
 - targeted messages and media
- Education and training
 - driver ed, continuing education, fleets ...
- Enforce existing laws
 - not ready for new laws yet

Priority needs and responsibilities

- Incentives and penalties
 - insurance ...
- Industry-government cooperation –
OEM, aftermarket, food ...
 - research
 - standards and guidelines

Personal concluding comments

- Distraction tougher than alcohol, belts, speed
- Distraction is not just cell phones, but cell phones and other telematics are the critical issue
- Technology development moving faster than legislation and regulation
- A new industry in the game: electronics
- The mobile lifestyle is alive, well, and growing

Personal concluding comments

- Research and data are essential - much to learn
- No easy legislative solution
- Education and awareness campaigns may have limited effects
- Traditional regulatory model won't work
- Cooperative government-industry strategies critical (both auto and electronics)

Personal concluding comments

- The good news:

The traffic system is remarkably forgiving

Drivers are remarkably adaptive

Questions and comments

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