

Press Release

DEKRA expert on distraction in traffic



The dangers of “multitasking”

- ▶ Smartphones and touchscreens are not the only risks
- ▶ Driving needs focused attention
- ▶ Use modern technology sensibly

Making phone calls, adjusting the car radio, operating the navigation system, reading or writing text messages – drivers are often distracted from the task of driving and thus increase the risk of accidents. “The term ‘multitasking’ may sound good, but in reality, it is nothing more than jumping back and forth between different tasks. At work, this often comes at the expense of efficiency and quality; when driving, it quickly becomes really dangerous”, warns Stefanie Ritter, accident researcher at DEKRA.

“Driving means understanding, deciding, reacting correctly, and all in real time – even in unexpected emergency situations. This requires 100 percent attention”, says the expert. According to a study by insurance firm Allianz, the risk of accidents increases by around half in many distracting situations, such as using certain smartphone applications, reading and writing text messages, or operating the GPS system. Those who search for an appealing radio station on the on-board computer while driving increase their risk of accidents even more.

Many people seem unimpressed by this. Almost 43 percent do not rule out using their cell phone while driving. From the accident researcher's point of view, this is a risky attitude: If you are distracted for just one second, you cover over 22 meters (~24 yards) “blind” at a speed of 80 km/h (~50 mph). At 50 km/h (~31 mph) in city traffic, the vehicle moves without control for 14 meters (~15 yards).

Having to refocus costs valuable time

“Anyone who takes their eyes off the road to look at their display only perceives key information peripherally, such as a child at the side of the road, the rear end of a traffic holdup, or a slow vehicle”, says the accident researcher. “In a critical situation, which

Date Stuttgart, 07.10.2025 / Nr. 081-A
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can occur at any time, it is often no longer possible to react appropriately because having to refocus costs valuable time.”

It's not just smartphones that can be a major distraction when driving. Eating, drinking, or searching for dropped items also pose risks. Loud or emotionally charged conversations with passengers or between passengers also divert attention from driving. Even making calls with a hands-free device and entering your destination using voice input can be a distraction. It is therefore better to stop for demanding phone calls or GPS programming.

Using modern technology sensibly

Even modern vehicle technology, which is supposed to assist with driving, sometimes exacerbates the distraction problem. In newer models with touch displays, important controls are sometimes hidden in sub-menus and can only be accessed by searching and tapping. According to a DEKRA study, this makes operation significantly more time-consuming, in some cases more than twice as long as with physical buttons. This correspondingly increases the amount of time spent driving “blind”.

The accident researcher appeals for the sensible use of modern technology, including smartphones, hands-free systems, and voice input. “Refrain from unnecessary use and concentrate fully on driving.”

Avoiding accidents caused by distraction – here is what you can do

- Complete tasks that could cause distraction before setting off: adjust your seat position, mirrors, choose your radio station and enter your GPS destination.
- Pair your smartphone with the hands-free device before setting off and put it out of reach.
- Even with a hands-free device, do not discuss difficult or emotionally charged topics while driving.
- In unfamiliar vehicles (rental cars, car sharing, etc.), familiarize yourself with the location of important controls (turn signals, lights, windshield wipers, ventilation, hazard lights, etc.) before setting off.
- When traveling with children, bring food and suitable entertainment.
- Ask your passenger for help (setting the navigation system, etc.).
- If possible, do not bring negative emotions into the car.
- It is better to take a break than to be tempted into “multitasking”.



About DEKRA

For 100 years, DEKRA has been a trusted name in safety. Founded in 1925 with the original goal of improving road safety through vehicle inspections, DEKRA has grown to become the world's largest independent, non-listed expert organization in the field of testing, inspection, and certification. Today, as a global partner, the company supports its customers with comprehensive services and solutions to drive safety and sustainability forward—fully aligned with DEKRA's anniversary motto, "Securing the Future." In 2024, DEKRA generated revenue of 4.3 billion euros. Around 48,000 employees are providing qualified and independent expert services in approximately 60 countries across five continents. DEKRA holds a Platinum rating from EcoVadis, placing it among the top 1% of the world's most sustainable companies.