

Press Release

Findings from the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2026

A quick glance at your cell phone can be enough to cause a severe crash

- ▶ Distractions behind the wheel put people's lives at risk every day
- ▶ Even looking for EV charging stations can divert your attention
- ▶ Automated driving features do not fully solve the problem

Quickly tapping the navigation system, lighting a cigarette, or replying to a text message: Behind the wheel, every second spent not looking at the road can lead to a tragedy. "Even minor distractions disrupt information processing and increase the risk of near-misses, sudden evasive maneuvers, or actual crashes", says DEKRA traffic psychologist Dr. Thomas Wagner. The latest DEKRA Road Safety Report 2026, titled "Working in Road Traffic", addresses, among other topics, the risk of accidents caused by driver distraction.

Many professional drivers, emergency responders, field service representatives, and courier and express delivery personnel spend many working hours each day on the road behind the wheel. In the cockpit of their vehicles, they are therefore highly susceptible to various sources of distraction. Official figures show just how widespread the problem is: In 2023 alone, the Federal Statistical Office in Germany recorded more than 7,500 traffic accidents resulting in personal injury in which distraction was identified as the cause. Experts, however, estimate that the actual number is far higher.

Various international studies, which the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2026 looks at in detail, confirm this danger. For example, surveys of taxi and truck drivers have shown that people frequently make phone calls or send text messages while driving. This significantly increases the risk of an accident. "Even entering a destination into the navigation system or writing a text message increases mental strain, impairs driving performance, and often leads to insufficient following distance or speeding", warns Dr. Thomas Wagner.

But it's not just smartphones, navigation systems, and the like that cause distractions. In freight transport in particular, monotonous drives lasting many hours can also become a problem. Long distances, repetitive routes, and driving alone for hours on

Date Stuttgart, 31.08.2026 / Nr. 078-A
Contact Wolfgang Sigloch
Phone +49.711.7861-2386
Fax +49.711.7861-742386
E-Mail wolfgang.sigloch@dekra.com

DEKRA e.V.
Corporate Communications
Handwerkstraße 15
70565 Stuttgart, Germany
www.dekra.com/en/press-overview

end often lead to boredom. Experts refer to this as being overwhelmed through under-stimulation. Studies show that drivers then increasingly engage in countless secondary activities. According to an Austrian study, nearly 40 percent of all near-misses occurred precisely at such moments – namely, when the driver's gaze was not on the road or other activities were being performed.

With the increasing use of electric trucks, another challenge arises: Drivers must find suitable charging options along the way and plan their routes accordingly. "This search can also tie up attention and lead to what is known as 'internal distraction'", the DEKRA traffic psychologist points out. This makes reliable charging infrastructure and intelligent route planning all the more important, so that drivers can concentrate on what matters most: their driving task.

Only those who remain alert drive safely

Even the most advanced technology is no free pass. After all, even modern driver-assistance systems and automated driving functions do not completely solve the problem. While drivers with appropriately certified automated systems (Level 3) are permitted to perform other tasks briefly in certain situations, they must be ready at all times to regain control of the vehicle within a few seconds. That is precisely where the difficulty lies: Anyone who is intensely focused on another task needs valuable time to fully refocus on traffic conditions. These few seconds can be critical in an emergency.

That is why experts recommend avoiding secondary activities in the vehicle as much as possible. "Tasks that require holding objects in your hand – such as smartphones – or focusing your gaze on a display for an extended period are particularly dangerous", warns Dr. Thomas Wagner. Mentally demanding activities could also impair reaction time. Only simple tasks that do not place heavy demands on the hands, eyes, or concentration are truly safe.

The most important message therefore remains the same: Drivers should focus exclusively on the road. After all, even a few seconds of inattention are often enough – and a seemingly harmless distraction can turn into a severe crash.

Further background on this topic, as well as on many other aspects related to "Working in Road Traffic", can be found in the DEKRA Road Safety Report 2026. It is available online at www.dekra-roadsafety.com.

Picture caption

Any kind of distraction at the wheel can lead to severe crashes. If commercial vehicles are involved, the consequences are often especially devastating, due to their heavy weights.

Photo: Werner Popp / DEKRA

About DEKRA

For more than 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. In 2025, DEKRA generated revenue of 4.4 billion euros. More than 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.