

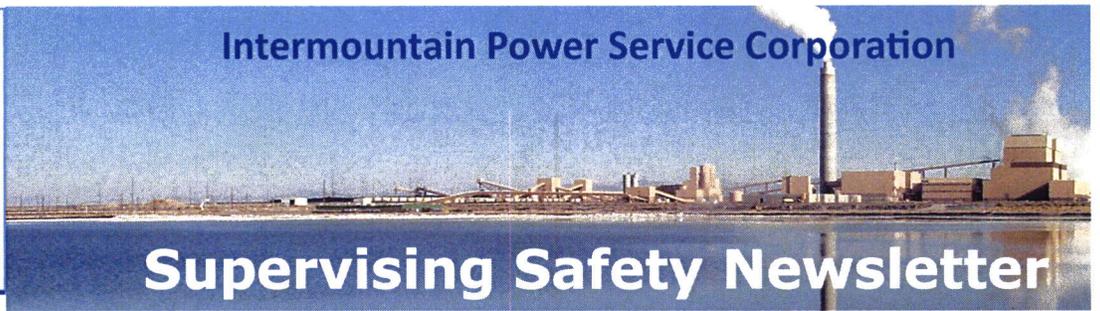
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Distracted Driving

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Distracted driving is estimated to be a factor in 25-50 percent of all traffic crashes. That's between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes every day.

Distracted driving is the presence of anything that can distract a driver's physical and mental attention from driving. While taking one's eyes off the road or hands off the steering wheel present obvious risks, activities that take a driver's mind away from driving are just as risky.

Driving instructors estimate that a driver makes an average of 200 decisions during every mile they drive. This leaves no room for multi-tasking while behind the wheel. If you are mentally solving business or family problems while driving, you are adding to the total cognitive workload. If a driver takes his/her eyes off the road for three to four seconds, the car will travel the length of a football field when going 55 mph. Other factors, such as fatigue, weather, and traffic conditions can increase the negative impact of distractions on driving ability.

Drivers who are distracted fail to recognize potential hazards on the road and react more slowly to traffic conditions, decreasing their "margin of safety."

Did you know that drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be in a crash?

Did you know that there is no difference in the cognitive distraction between hand-held and hands-free devices?

Did you know that 80 percent of crashes are related to driver inattention?

Things that are a distraction while driving:

- Other passengers, especially children.
- Driving an unfamiliar vehicle or route.
- Unsecured cargo.
- Adjusting in-vehicle electronics, including navigation systems, radios or CD players, and using a cell phone
- Eating or reading while driving.
- Engaging in intense or emotional conversations.
- Emotional state and/or serious personal problems.
- Grooming.

Clues that a driver is distracted:

- A passenger in the car screamed or gasped because of something you did or did not do.
- Ran a stop sign or stop light unintentionally.
- Swerved suddenly to avoid an animal, a car, or another highway hazard.
- Slammed on the brakes because you didn't see the car in front of you stop.
- Don't remember driving from one place to another.
- Drifted in your lane or into another lane of traffic.

These events are clues or signals that you are distracted while driving. Next time you decide to read a road map, a work report, referee an argument, or even engage in an intense conversation on a cell phone or with occupants in the car, ask yourself—who's driving?

Distracted driving can also be a problem at work. It is important to remember that anytime a person is behind the wheel, running a tool, or operating a piece of equipment he/she should not be on the phone, texting, or being distracted in anyway. Everyone needs to be alert and aware of their happenings and surroundings. Remember that it only takes a split second for something to go wrong. If we are distracted, the likelihood of an incident or injury occurring goes up dramatically.

Please remember to be safe whenever you are behind the wheel. Nothing is so important that you need to risk your life or the lives of others while driving.

