

Road Safety Week begins today



A campaign launched today by the charity Brake at the start of [Road Safety Week](#) calls on drivers across Scotland to [tune into road safety](#), to prevent appalling crashes caused by multitasking at the wheel. The campaign appeals to drivers to turn off their phones or put them in the boot, and urges everyone to refuse to speak on the phone to someone who's driving. It's being launched almost a decade after hand-held mobiles at the wheel were banned and coincides with a week-long enforcement campaign.

Brake and partners [Specsavers](#) and [Romex](#) are revealing statistics confirming the extent of driver distraction, and its impact on vulnerable road users in Scotland:

Nearly 85,000 Scottish drivers have points on their licence for using their mobile phone at the wheel or being otherwise distracted (figures by postcode). One in 11 (6.2%) of these drivers have six points or more for driving distracted and three in four (75%) are male;

Six in ten Scottish school children (62%) report being driven by a driver talking on a phone and three in four (77%) have spotted drivers on mobile phones outside their school or home – suggesting the majority of children are being endangered by drivers for the sake of a call or text.

The tune in to road safety campaign is being launched in Road Safety Week by events and demonstrations in schools, universities and town centres across the UK, highlighting the dangers of taking your eyes, hands or mind off the road. The campaign is being supported by Transport Scotland and Police Scotland, who are coordinating a week-long campaign of heightened police enforcement across the country targeting drivers on hand-held phones.

Distraction reduces hazard perception and increases reaction times in a similar way to drink-driving, making drivers much more likely to cause deaths and injuries. Drivers who think they can multi-task are fooling themselves: research shows 98% are unable to divide their time without it affecting performance. Talking on a phone hand-held or hands free, texting, emailing, adjusting sat navs, eating, drinking and smoking are all proven to increase crash risk.

Transport Minister Keith Brown said:-“This campaign addresses the fact that any activity which takes a driver’s concentration away from the road is potentially dangerous. We would encourage everyone to acknowledge driving as a skill which requires concentration and judgement.

“While the number of road casualties in Scotland are at their lowest ever level, there is still simply no room for complacency. One death on Scotland’s roads is one too many and our focus continues to be on reducing the numbers further.”

Dr Terry Lansdown, driver distraction expert from Heriot-Watt University, said: “Nearly 1.3 Million people die each year from road traffic crashes and data suggest that by 2030, road traffic injury will be the fifth most prevalent global cause of death. Robust international data shows that distraction is a major contributor in traffic incidents. It has been reported to be a factor in nearly four in five road collisions and other US data suggests that distraction is a component in 16% of fatal crashes. For British males aged between 15-24 years, driving is the most likely reason for premature death.

“Inattention is either the most dangerous error or the second most dangerous error that the drivers of trucks or passenger vehicles, respectively, can make. In general, any ‘additional to driving’ tasks reduce the driver’s ability to respond to a potential hazard, and phone use has been consistently shown to be one of the most distracting things the driver can attempt.

More and more lives being ruined every year as a result of the temptation to do additional things while driving. Let's do what we can to stop that happening."

Drivers caught using a hand-held phone at the wheel to call or text face a (recently increased) fixed penalty notice of £100 and three points, or may be offered a course instead of taking points. In 2012, more than 10,000 drivers caught using their phone at the wheel took a 'what's driving us' course, instead of opting for points. In some cases drivers may go to court and face disqualification and maximum fine of £1,000. Drivers who cause a crash and kill someone while using a phone could face up to 14 years in prison, as well as the knowledge that someone died because of their decision to use their phone at the wheel.