

Texas SHSP

Distracted Driving Emphasis Area

2022 - 2027



**TEXAS
TOGETHER**
on the Road to Zero

A graphic of the state of Texas. The western and northern portions are colored red, while the eastern portion is colored blue. A stylized road with white dashed lines curves across the bottom right of the map.

TEXAS TOGETHER

on the Road to Zero

The development of the *Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan* was led by the Traffic Safety Division of the Texas Department of Transportation working in conjunction with the Center for Transportation Safety at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. Hundreds of safety stakeholders from across the state representing local, regional, and state agencies, law enforcement, industry and advocates, engineers, clinicians, and educators actively participated in the process.



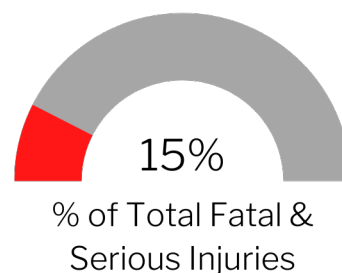
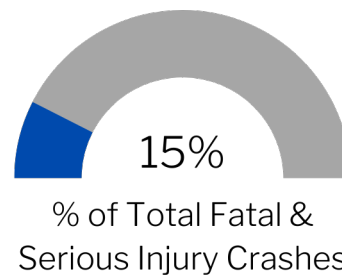
Section 6.7 Distracted Driving

Background

NHTSA defines distracted driving as “anything that diverts the driver’s attention from the primary tasks of navigating the vehicle and responding to critical events. To put it another way, a distraction is anything that takes your eyes off the road (visual distraction), your mind off the task of driving (cognitive distraction), or your hands off the wheel (manual distraction)”. Distracted driving is difficult to measure because it is difficult to observe the behavior, but research shows it is a common practice. Therefore, it can be presumed the data are underreported. (Venkatraman, V., Richard, C. M., Magee, K., & Johnson, K. (2021, July). Countermeasures that work: A highway safety countermeasures guide for State Highway Safety Offices, 10th edition, 2020 (Report No. DOT HS 813 097). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration p. 4-1.)

Even though the data may be underreported, 2021 data show 10.6% of fatalities and 18.6 percent of serious injuries were attributed to distracted driving. These crashes occur more frequently in urban areas (63.2%) than in rural (34.3%) areas, and they are more likely to occur on the state road system (63.2%) rather than off the system (36.8%).

Distracted Driving



Historical & Trend Crash Data Analysis

Distracted driving often overlaps with other countermeasure areas where both behaviors and circumstances are evident. For example, in 27% of run off the road crashes and 10.8% of impaired driving crashes distraction was also a factor. In addition, nearly 18% of crashes involving a young driver are attributable to distraction.

The definition for distracted driving is straight forward since there is a specific crash factor on the CR-3 form where an officer can indicate whether they believe distraction may have been a factor in the reported crash. The type of distraction is not codified but may be included in the narrative section of the report. The fatal and suspected serious injury crashes related to a distracted driver(s) represents 15% of all crashes#. Since 2017, the distracted driving crash trend is flat specifically related to fatal crashes, but 2021 saw a sharp uptick in distraction as a reported crash factor. It is important to reverse this to reach the state goal of zero deaths in 2050. The distracted driving crashes are illustrated in Figure 6.8.1 and the fatal and serious injuries are summarized in Figure 6.8.2.

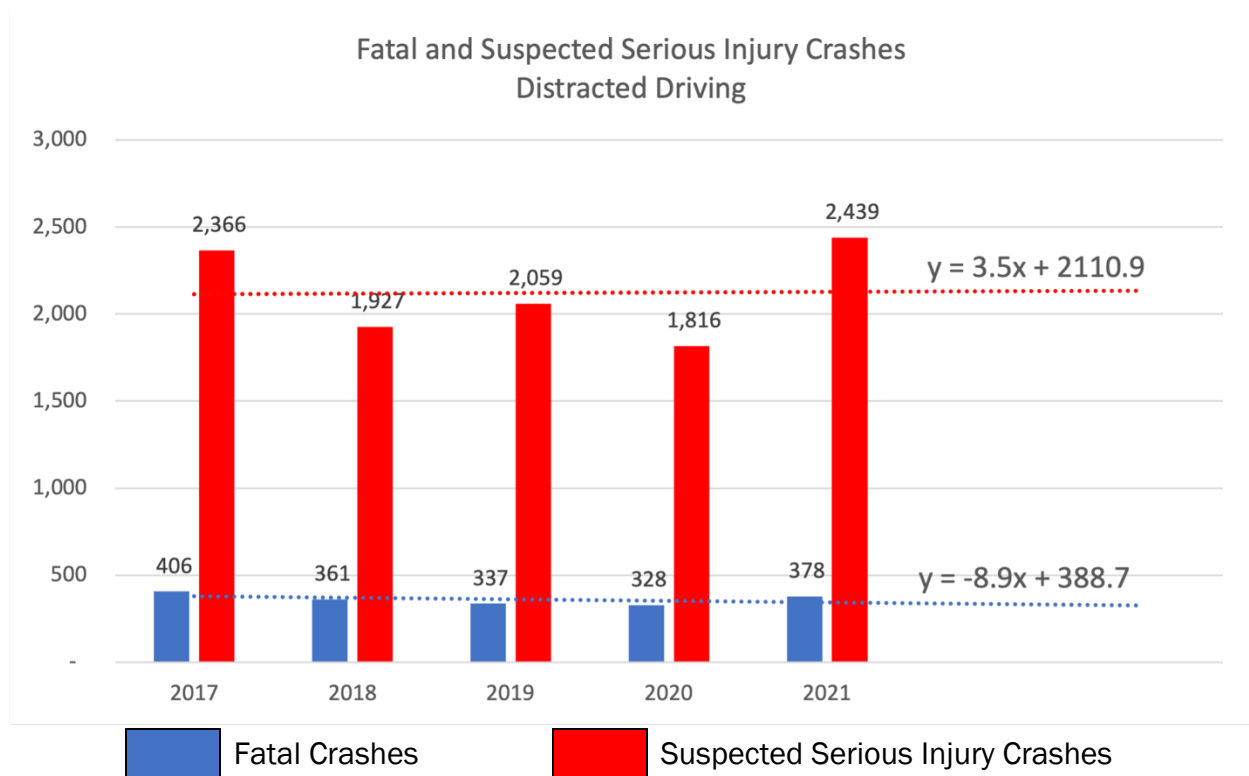


Figure 6.8.1. Distracted Driving EA: Fatal and Suspected Serious Injury Crashes (2017-2021)

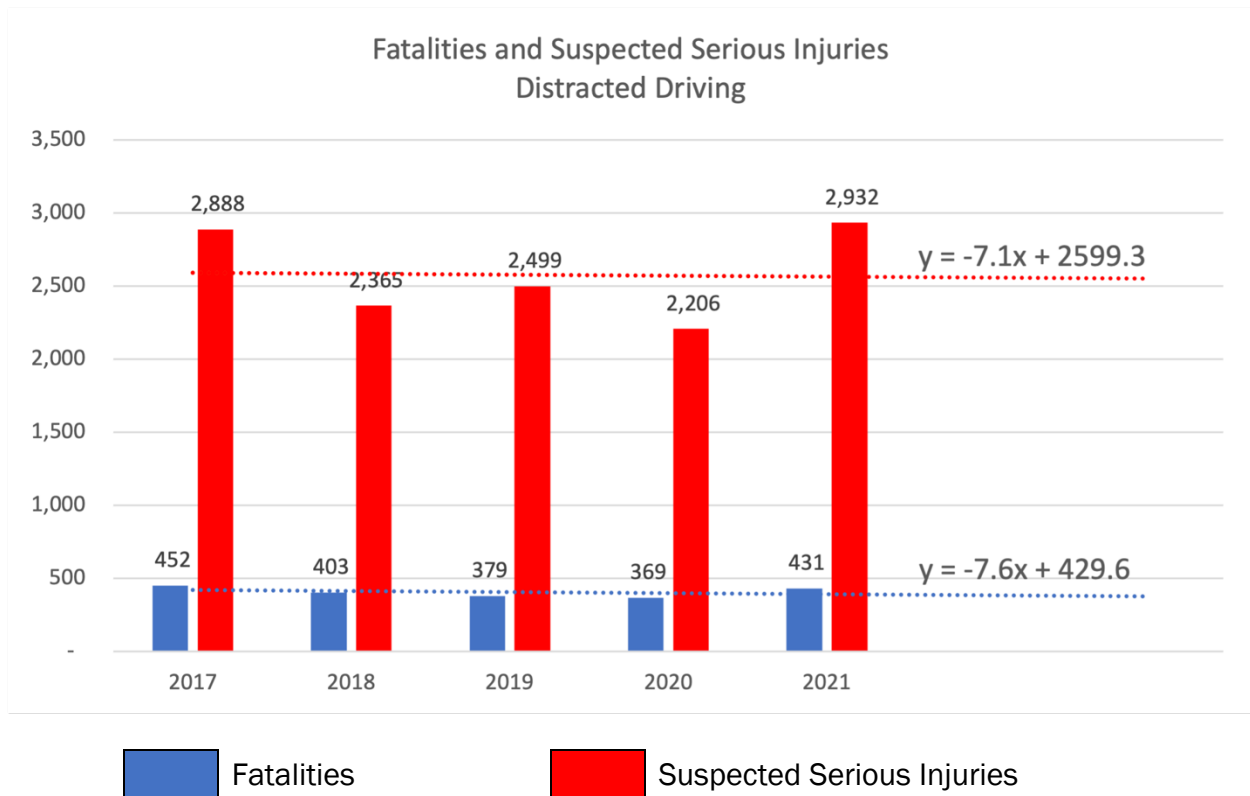
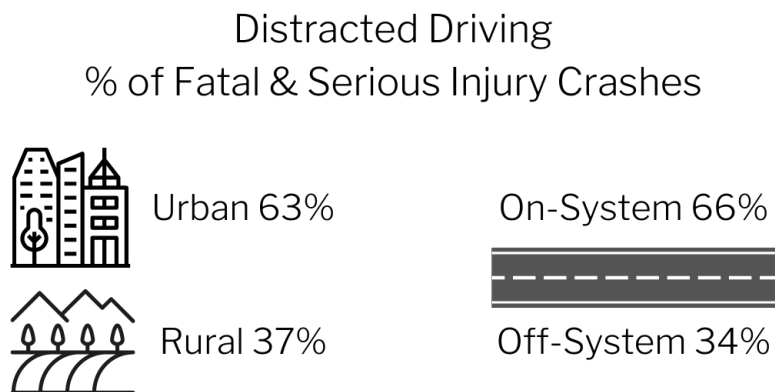


Figure 6.8.2. Distracted Driving EA: Fatal and Suspected Serious Injuries (2017-2021)

Throughout the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) process, the Emphasis Area (EA) teams examined the representation of rural and urban as well as on- and off-system in terms of the crash factors associated with the specific EA. Regarding distracted driving, 63%



of the crashes occurred in areas designated as urban while 66% of these types of crashes happened on roadways considered on-system.

From 2017 through 2021, there were 12,417 fatal and suspected serious injury crashes attributed to distracted driving. These crashes resulted in 2,034 fatalities and 12,890 additional individuals with suspected serious injuries. Distracted driving is a behavioral crash factor. Therefore, other factors likely play a role in distracted driving crashes whether it be a location factor or user type. Distracted driving crashes are a significant part of Texas' traffic safety challenges representing 10% of fatal crashes and 10% of total fatalities. If the state can effectively address distracted driving, it will have a significant impact on our ability to reach zero deaths. After identifying prevalent crash factors, related to distracted driving crashes, the EA team considered those overlapping factors in the identification of strategies and the development of implementation plans. These crash factors include:

- ⇒ Distracted Driving Crashes (12,417) – 27% resulted in a run-off the road crash with 53% of those occurring in areas designated as urban
- ⇒ Distracted Driving Crashes (12,417) – 18% involved young drivers (age 15-20)
- ⇒ Distracted Driving Crashes (12,417) – 11% also involved impaired driving
- ⇒ Distracted Driving & Intersections Crashes (4,418) – 71% occurred in areas designated as urban

Objective for Emphasis Area

Reduce fatalities and serious injuries by identifying, implementing, and evaluating awareness strategies to reduce distracted driving.

Strategies & Implementation Plans

Strategy 6.7.1 Utilize data and information to communicate the dangers of distracted driving to teens, their parents, employers, public officials, and others.

Implementation Action Plan	
6.1.1	Use crash data and survey results to develop and document a suite of age-specific countermeasures and messages about the dangers of distracted driving.
6.7.1.2	Educate public officials and employers about the human and economic costs of distracted driving through outreach programs.
6.7.1.3	Educate teens and their parents on the Graduated Driver Licensing law with specific attention to the provisions designed to address distracted driving such as limiting the number of passengers and disallowing cell phone use.
6.7.1.4	Implement effective Peer to Peer programs: Teens in the Driver Seat (Junior High and High School) and U in the Driver Seat (College).
Facilitator(s)	TxDOT Traffic Safety Division, Behavioral Traffic Safety
Participating Organizations	TxDOT, MPOs, TTI, Schools, Driving Schools, AAA, NSC
Effectiveness	***
Cost to Implement	6.7.1.1 \$, 6.7.1.2 \$, 6.7.1.3 \$, 6.7.1.4 \$
Time to Implement	Currently Ongoing
Barriers	Lack of additional funding and/or resources Some schools unwilling to participate Parents are sometimes too busy or don't take the time to learn about GDL and educate their children

Strategy 6.7.2 Improve and increase enforcement capabilities for addressing distracted driving.

Implementation Action Plan	
6.7.2.1	Use Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) grants and high visibility enforcement techniques to enforce distracted driving state laws and local ordinances, especially where the data document crashes where distraction is a contributing factor.
6.7.2.2	Identify and disseminate model distracted driving policies for law enforcement agencies for guidance on enhancing officer safety. Use the DPS policy as a model that agencies can emulate or revise.
Facilitator(s)	TxDOT Traffic Safety Division, Behavioral Traffic Safety
Participating Organizations	TxDOT, DPS, Local Law Enforcement Agencies
Effectiveness	***
Cost to Implement	6.7.2.1 \$\$, 6.7.2.2 \$
Time to Implement	Currently Ongoing
Barriers	Some law enforcement agencies lack the resources or the interest in participating

Strategy 6.7.3 Increase installation of engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving.

Implementation Action Plan	
6.7.3.1	Use network screening techniques to identify and systemically implement engineering countermeasures known to reduce distracted driving, such as edge line, centerline, and transverse rumble strips, wider and brighter striping, and lighting especially in areas associated with distracted driving crashes.

Implementation Action Plan	
Facilitator(s)	TxDOT Traffic Safety Division
Participating Organizations	TxDOT, MPOs
Effectiveness	***
Cost to Implement	6.7.3.1 \$\$\$
Time to Implement	Long
Barriers	Insufficient funding

Strategy 6.7.4 Use technology to reduce distracted driving crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities.

Implementation Action Plan	
6.7.4.1	Test and implement apps to encourage distraction-free driving or discourage distracted driving.
6.7.4.2	Implement an incentive-based app specifically addressing teen drivers.
6.7.4.3	Educate the consumers, parents, employers, and the public with age-specific messages about vehicle safety technologies (mycardoeswhat.org) and tools to encourage distraction-free driving through car dealers, the media, and employers.
Facilitator(s)	TxDOT Traffic Safety Division, Behavioral Traffic Safety
Participating Organizations	TxDOT, TTI, Schools, Driving Schools, AAA, NSC
Effectiveness	**
Cost to Implement	6.7.4.1 \$, 6.7.4.2 \$, 6.7.4.3 \$
Time to Implement	Currently Ongoing
Barriers	Lack of additional funding and/or resources Lack of volunteer leaders

Distracted Driving Emphasis Area Team		
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Kara	Thorp	AAA

EA Team Members current as of September 2022