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Erie Insurance releases police data on top 10 driving distractions involved in fatal car crashes

Insurer offers tips on how to avoid deadly distractions to coincide with National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

ERIE, Pa. (April 3, 2013) -Of the more than 65,000 people killed in car crashes over the past two years, one in 10 were in crashes where at least one of the drivers was distracted. That's according to police report data analyzed by [Erie Insurance](#) in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), a nationwide census of fatal motor vehicle traffic crashes maintained by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Erie Insurance consulted with the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety](#) in its analysis.

"Distracted driving is any activity that takes your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, or your mind off your primary task of driving safely," said Doug Smith, senior vice president of personal lines at Erie Insurance. "We looked at what law enforcement officers across the country reported when they filled out reports on fatal crashes and the results were disturbing. We hope the data will encourage people to avoid these high-risk behaviors that needlessly increase their risk of being involved in a fatal crash."

The analysis, which looked at data from 2010 and 2011, showed police listed the majority of drivers who were distracted as "generally distracted" or "lost in thought." Police also listed several more specific types of distractions.

Below are the top 10 distractions involved in fatal car crashes:

Rank	Distraction Type	Percentage of Distracted Drivers
1	Generally distracted or "lost in thought" (daydreaming)	62%
2	Cell phone use (talking, listening, dialing, texting)	12%
3	Outside person, object or event, such as rubbernecking	7%
4	Other occupants (talking with or looking at other people in car)	5%
5	Using or reaching for device brought into vehicle, such as navigational device, headphones	2%
6	Eating or drinking	2%
7	Adjusting audio or climate controls	2%
8	Using other device/controls integral to vehicle, such as adjusting rear view mirrors, seats, or using OEM navigation system	1%
9	Moving object in vehicle, such as pet or insect	1%
10	Smoking related (includes smoking, lighting up, putting ashes in ashtray)	1%

Smith added that because FARS data on distraction is based largely on police officers' judgment at the time of the crash, and because some people may be reluctant to admit they were distracted when being interviewed by police after a fatal car crash, the numbers are difficult to verify and may, in fact, under-represent the seriousness and prevalence of driving distractions.

The data is meaningful, however, because unlike surveys in which consumers self-report the types of distracted behaviors they engage in, the FARS data is based on actual police reports on fatal crashes.

In addition to encouraging drivers to avoid the distractions above, Erie Insurance offers the following tips to avoid cell phone distraction:

- Let incoming cell phone calls go to voice mail
- If someone calls you while they're driving, ask them to call you back later and hang up
- If you must talk or text, pull over
- Lead by example; if you want your children to drive safely, show them how it's done

Visit www.erieinsurance.com/distracteddriving to see an infographic on distracted driving.

According to A.M. Best Company, Erie Insurance Group, based in Erie, Pennsylvania, is the 15th largest homeowners insurer and 12th largest automobile insurer in the United States based on direct premiums written and the 20th largest property/casualty insurer in the United States based on total lines net premium written. The Group, rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best Company, has nearly 4.5 million policies in force and operates in 11 states and the District of Columbia. Erie Insurance Group is a FORTUNE 500 company. Erie Insurance is proud to be named a J.D. Power and Associates' [2012 Customer Service Champion](#). ERIE is one of only 50 U.S. companies so named. Erie Insurance is also recognized on the list of Ward's 50 Group of top performing insurance companies, which analyzes the financial performance of 3,000 property and casualty companies and recognizes the top performers for achieving outstanding results in safety, consistency and financial performance over a five-year period (2007-2011).

News releases and more information about Erie Insurance Group are available at www.erieinsurance.com.

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