

# Who's The Most Distracted Driver?

By Kenny Smith



# Who's The Most Distracted Driver?

Audience vote

- ☐ Public Works
- ☐ Utilities
- ☐ A New Young Driver
- ☐ Law Enforcement
- ☐ Transit Bus or Van



# Doing Everything But Driving...



From California POST - Did You Know series Distracted Driving

# Who's The Most Distracted Driver?

It's Law Enforcement because:

- Patrol Driving
  - ✓ Monitoring for traffic offenses (visual, radar, license plate)
  - ✓ Watching people – patrol
  - ✓ Radio
  - ✓ Cell/smart phone – maybe two
  - ✓ Computer/"Mobile Data Terminal"
- Emergency Response Driving
  - ✓ Radio
  - ✓ Cell phone – maybe two
  - ✓ Computer/"Mobile Data Terminal"
  - ✓ All this while trying to drive quickly



# Distractions

## All Motorists

- Cell Phone + text
- Eating/drinking
- Reading maps
- Makeup/hair
- Shaving
- Kids/passengers
- Pets
- Sightseeing

## Police

- Cell Phone Use (entity /personal)
- MDT/Computers
- Patrol duties – looking down alleys, looking for bad guys, spot light
- License plate reader
- Looking for address
- Adjusting controls for...



# 5 seconds

Average time your eyes are off the road when texting

At 55mph, enough time to travel a football field blindfolded. [\(2009, VTTI\)](#)

Question: is law enforcement use of computers similar to texting?

Officers offer no benefit if they never make it to that call for help, report of a shooting, or high-priority call...

*FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 2/4/14*

<http://leb.fbi.gov/2014/february/officer-survival-spotlight-speed-and-seatbelts>

# Media on Distracted Cops



# Is It Too Much Technology?

Kenny's view:

Technology is not the culprit, we are.

Humans try to multi-task but are limited in that ability.

It's how we use the technology that gets us in trouble

The answer lies somewhere in the culture we develop for the job

- If you're not developing the entity's culture, your employees are...





# Distracted Driving...Things to Know

“...is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. “

Texting/Computer	Reading, including maps
Using a cell/smart phone	Using navigation devices
Eating and drinking	Watching a video
Talking to passengers	Adjusting radio/CD/MP3 player
Grooming	

*Source: Distraction.Gov website*



# Distracted Driving...Things to Know

## Distracted Driving

- “Focusing on anything other than driving, while driving”. -Richard Ashton, Retired Chief, Police Chief Magazine



# Driving + Stress + Distractions = Errors

- “So we have a few distractions, so what? Law enforcement has been doing this for a long time. We know what we’re doing.”
- Stressors
  - Emergency response driving
  - Intersections – especially red lights
  - Quick driving...High speed
  - Adrenaline rush
  - Pedestrians
  - Many others



# Distracted Driving...Things to Know

- Distracted Driving has three components:
  1. Visual – taking eyes off road
  2. Manual – taking hand(s) off the wheel
  3. Cognitive – taking mind off primary task of driving...
    - Trying to multi-task
    - Secondary tasks compete with primary task (driving)

Because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.



# Distracted Driving...Things to Know

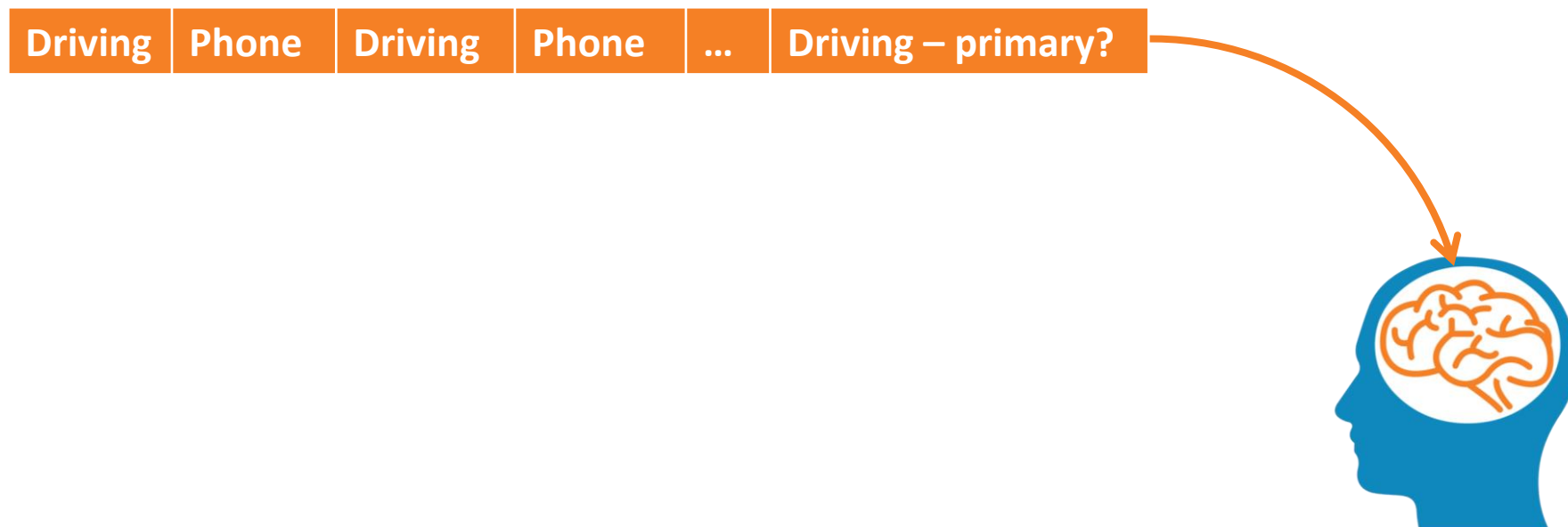
- Understanding the Distracted Brain ([DistractedDriving.NSC.Org](http://DistractedDriving.NSC.Org))
- Human brains do not process two tasks well at the same time
  - Brain handles tasks sequentially; independently
  - Brain switches back and forth between tasks



# Distracted Driving...Things to Know

Human brain switches between primary and secondary tasks

- Driving to phone (back and forth)
- After many times...which is primary, which is secondary?



- Causes Inattention Blindness

- When people do two **cognitively complex** tasks (driving and using a cell phone is example), causes brain to shift focus to one of them as primary
  - but which one?
- A type of cognitive distraction – “looking” but not “seeing”

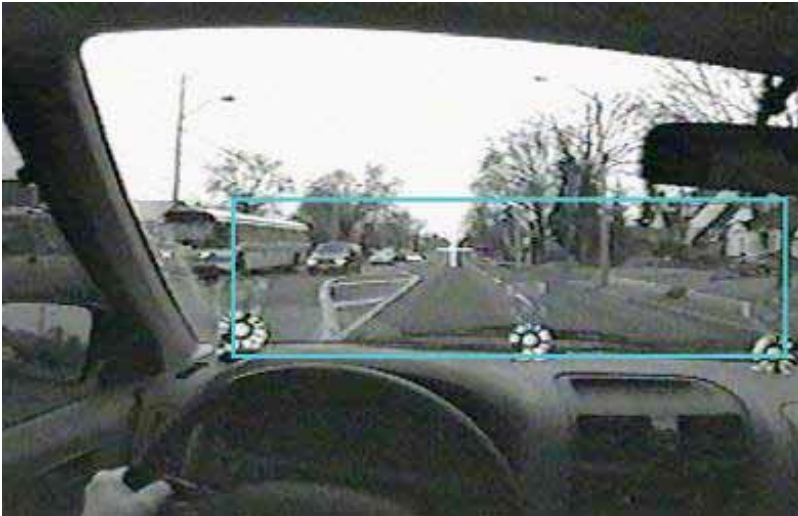
- NSC – Understanding the Distracted Brain



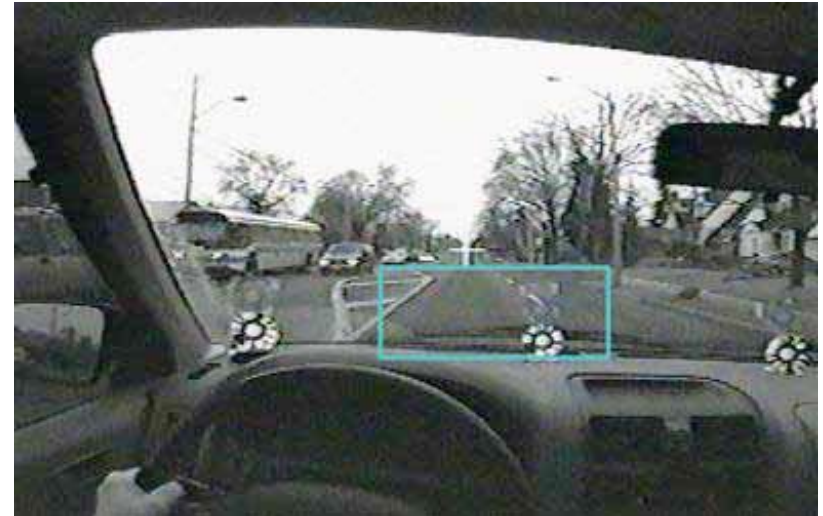
# Cognitive – Inattention Blindness

Cognitive overload causes...

a narrow scope of vision.



No cell phone in use; just driving.



Hands-free phone.

NSC – Understanding the Distracted Brain



# Law Enforcement Claims That Bug Me

- Collisions resulting from computer/MDT use
- Any intersection collision where officer is charged with reckless driving
- No lights/sirens activated = no defense; no chance for immunity
  - \$500,000 - \$1,500,000 average
- Abuse of “code 3”; not on duty, going home/station/lunch
- Any “code 3” intersection collision > 40 MPH



# Preliminary 2016 Law Enforcement Officer Fatalities

January 1 through October 17, 2016 vs. January 1 through October 17, 2015

	2016	2015	% Change
Total Fatalities	102	94	+9%
Firearms-related	45	30	+50%
Traffic-related	39	38	+3%
Other Causes	18	26	-31%

*Please note: These numbers reflect total officer fatalities comparing January 1 through October 17, 2016 vs. January 1 through October 17, 2015*

## 2016 Fatalities by State

Texas	17
Louisiana	8
California	7

<http://www.nleomf.org/facts/officer-fatalities-data/>



...a reduction in the number of officers killed in vehicle accidents can result if they simply **reduce their speed** and **wear a seatbelt**. Applying these two factors can save many of the lives of law enforcement professionals.

*FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 2/4/14*



# Distracted Accident Trends

Patrol – Normal driving; scanning, looking for violators

- Frequency trend: backing and hitting rear of car ahead
- Causes: Distraction from cell phones and interacting with computer

Response – Driving to “call for assistance”

- Frequency /Severity trend: intersection collisions(> costs -higher speeds)
- Causes: Distraction interacting with computer, speed
- Performance level – statute for emergency vehicles (embed into policies)



# The Problem

Finding a balance between safety and effectiveness



Bottom line...when we get a call for assistance, we have to arrive there able to assist.



# The Problem

Law Enforcement's "Response Driving" culture has been relatively lax.

- ✓ Who has the right of way when responding
- ✓ Embrace State statutes
- ✓ What's an appropriate speed through a controlled intersection
- ✓ The perception of needing to get there ASAP



Merge with that the distraction of the MDTs/other equipment; doing the right thing gets really fuzzy for the officers.



# Solutions

1. Clarify your “Response Driving” position and vision. Make sure your procedures address your intended actions and State emergency vehicle requirements.
2. Train for policy knowledge and field utilization. Training without direction is a black hole.
3. Investigate accidents and enforce policy.

“What management cares about, will get done.” So, these efforts have to be visible to the officers on an ongoing basis.



# Training That Helps

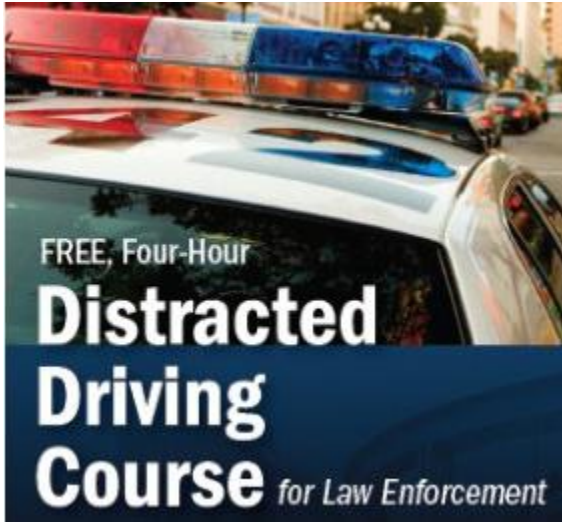
Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC). Many sources are available; just use them.

- Focus on the decision making (class) portion , especially, approaching intersections, clearing intersections and distracted driving.





# Training That Helps



Texas Municipal Police Assoc. has teamed up with Texas Dept. of Transportation (TxDOT) to provide this **free** training.

[Buckleuptexas.com/law-enforcement-safety](http://Buckleuptexas.com/law-enforcement-safety)

**PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE 4 HOURS OF TCOLE CREDIT**

Last 5 yrs. instructed 1,781 classes - trained 91,416 people

10/1/16 Updated - now scheduling

# Technology That May Assist

Telematics - GPS based system that logs vehicle's path and vehicle functions. Requires someone to review data and act on it.

Software for laptop restricts keyboard use – reduces distraction.

<http://www.srrsllc.biz/default.htm>



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# Obstructed Vision

## Line of sight obstructions

- Driving Forward
  - ✓ Mobile Data Terminal/Computer
  - ✓ Dash mounted camera
  - ✓ License plate reader
  - ✓ Shotgun rack

Post-accident: Many officer's testimonies include the words "I just did not see them coming from the right as I entered the intersection."



# Obstructed Vision



# Obstructed Vision



**A clear unobstructed line of sight is critical to safe driving**

Photo: Distracted Driving by Law Enforcement Officers Resulting in Auto Liability Claims , Saint Mary's University of Minnesota



# Obstructed Vision

## GOVERNING

THE STATES AND LOCALITIES

FINANCE | HEALTH | INFRASTRUCTURE | MANAGEMENT | ELECTIONS | POLITICS | PUBLIC SAFETY | URBAN | EDUC

### States Start Restricting Police License Plate Readers

Critics say the now-popular technology needs to be regulated, but cops worry too much regulation will hurt their ability to fight crime.

BY TOD NEWCOMBE | AUGUST 12, 2015





# Law Enforcement Best Practices - Auto

- Adopt clear policy, establish culture by training and enforcement
  - Basic auto use - seat belts, backing, speed and distraction
  - Emergency Response driving (CEVO)
  - Pursuit driving
- Periodic checkups to measure customs to policy
- Relocate line-of-sight obstructions
- Consider technology to help limit exposures not multiply them



# Questions?

