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## NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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### **Keep our roads safe by removing distractions**

Distracted driving is the act of driving while doing any other task that takes your focus off the road – texting, talking on the phone, watching videos, reading, messing with the radio, and even passengers can be a distraction.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for about five seconds. At 55 mph, that is like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In Nebraska in 2023, there were 3,405 drivers involved in distracted driving crashes and 629 crashes due to cell phone distractions. The Panhandle 2021 SHARP (Student Health and Risk Prevention Surveillance System) self-reported data states 78.6% of students text or used an app on a cell phone while driving.

*You have one job. Put the phone down and just drive.*

### **Signs of distracted driving**

- Nearly striking an object, vehicle, or pedestrian
- Failure to safely maintain lane control
- Driving into opposing lane, crossing center line
- Slow response to traffic signals

### **Managing Driver Distraction**

- Stow your phone. Turning off the phone or putting it in “do not disturb” mode can help remove the temptation to browse online at a red light or respond right away to a text message.
- Pull over if you need to take or make a call. Safety first.
- Passengers can be of help. Ask your passenger to change the radio, monitor GPS, or look for street signs.
- Before you go, research your destination and plan ahead to get there safely.

- Secure your pets. Unsecured pets can be a distraction.
- Pull over to a safe place to address situations involving children in the car.
- Focus on driving. Multi-tasking behind the wheel is dangerous – keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel.

Bill Kovarik, Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) Highway Safety Office Administrator said, “Driving is a full-time task. If you are driving, just drive. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows 3,142 lives were lost in the US in 2020 due to distracted driving. Every driver needs to be responsible for their driving. Buckle UP, put the phones down, and drive sober.”

For additional information about worksite wellness, visit [www.pphd.org/pwwc.html](http://www.pphd.org/pwwc.html) or call Nicole Berosek at 308-279-3496

The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District. The Council specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work, and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

Sources: [Distracted Driving - Nebraska Department of Transportation](#); [SHARP Data](#); [10 Tips to Reduce Distracted Driving | Travelers Insurance](#)