

Distracted Driving Bites

National Safe Driving Week

Distracted driving is an important topic, both in the safety sphere and in the context of public discussion. Focus is often placed on the dangers of handheld devices, and for good reason. But while this is one example of a potentially fatal action that can be taken behind the wheel, it's not the only one.

December 1 – 7 is National Safe Driving Week and, in partnership with the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada, the Canada Safety Council wants to highlight the dangers of distracted driving, with a particular focus on eating behind the wheel

“Distraction is distraction, no matter how you slice it,” said Gareth Jones, President and CEO of the Canada Safety Council. “We all have a responsibility — to ourselves, to our loved ones and to our fellow road users — to remain vigilant at all times and stay focused on the task at hand.”

The task of driving always requires your full attention. Any activity that removes your focus off the road can be qualified as distraction. This can include using your phone, reprogramming your radio or Global Positioning System (GPS), grooming, entering a conversation with passengers and, yes, even eating and drinking behind the wheel.

A momentary loss of focus on the road can cost you a second or two in which to react to a sudden change in expected traffic or behaviour. And that small moment of time can make all the difference in the world.

“Distracted driving is an extremely risky behaviour, and the stakes are high – death, injury, property damage, and rising insurance premiums,” said Peter Braid, Chief Executive Officer of IBAC. “That’s why insurance brokers are partnering with the Canada Safety Council to raise awareness of the danger. The fries may smell great, but it’s not worth the risk. Resist the temptation and keep your eyes on the road.”

Do you identify yourself among the group of people who eat behind the wheel? You’re not alone. It’s a common activity, with some polls online estimating the number at up to 70 per cent of all drivers. Distraction behind the wheel is a major contributor to collisions and near-misses; however, drivers do not often correlate eating behind the wheel as a form of distraction.

HOW DO I AVOID IT?

1. Leave yourself extra time and eat before you leave or wait until after you arrive at your destination.
2. Don't keep food in your vehicle. It's easy to avoid the temptation when it's not within arm's reach! Leave the granola bar or the candy bar at home. Alternatively, leave your snacks in the back seat or the trunk, out of reach from the driver seat, and pull over if you feel like you need to eat.

3. Wait until you're fully stopped — for example, at a red light — before taking a sip from your non-alcoholic drink. Do not drink alcohol behind the wheel.
4. If you're picking up fast food, resist the temptation to immediately dig in. Wait until you arrive to start eating.
5. If you absolutely cannot wait to eat, park your car and enjoy your meal while immobile.

No meal is worth endangering the lives of your fellow road users or your own. Act responsibly and help keep Canadian roads safe for everyone!

— 30 —

For more information, please contact:

[Lewis Smith](#)

Manager, National Projects, Canada Safety Council

lewis.smith@safety-council.org

[Liz Scott](#)

Director of Operations, Insurance Brokers Association of Canada

416-367-1831 ext. 120

lscott@ibac.ca