

In December 2010, Danny Wells, Director WA-C asked me to prepare and present a monthly article on Rider Education until a permanent Chapter Rider Educator is appointed. In addition, one of the responsibilities of a Chapter Educator is to: "Read, review and share the monthly District, Region and International Newsletters and articles with the Membership" -- you.

Bruce R. McMahill

## WA District Newsletter Rider Education Article of January 2011

### **“Pay Attention!”**

Driver inattention is a major contributor to highway crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that at least 25% of police-reported crashes involve some form of driver inattention. Driver distraction is one form of inattention and is a factor in more than half of these crashes.

Distraction occurs when a driver is delayed in the recognition of information needed to safely accomplish the driving task because something within or outside the vehicle draws his attention away from driving. The presence of a triggering event distinguishes a distracted driver from one who is simply inattentive or "lost in thought."

Driver distractions or inattentive driving play a part in one out of every four motor vehicle crashes. That's more than 1.5 million collisions a year - more than 4,300 crashes each day!  
Inattention Fuels Most Accidents

Many accidents are caused by actions as simple as tuning the radio or as innocent as glancing at a dog on the sidewalk. Carelessness or inattention - even for a second - causes more accidents than anything else.

A report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicates that inattention caused 68% of rear-end crashes. Other kinds of crashes - backing up, lane changes and merging usually caused by a driver not recognizing an obstacle or by a driver failing to pay attention.

#### **Cell Phones:**

Using a cell phone while driving increases your chance of getting into a crash by 400%.

When dialing a phone number or engaging in intense conversation, you're not watching the road like you should. A "hands-free" apparatus is helpful, but they can't prevent you from becoming involved in a conversation and losing concentration. Your best defense is to pull off the road and stop in a safe place.

### **Have You Been a Distracted Driver?**

#### **When driving, do you ever?**

- Tune the radio
- Eat, drink, or smoke
- Pick something up from the floor or between the seats
- Read, write
- Reach for the glove compartment
- Talk on the cell phone
- Clean the inside of the windshield
- Argue with another passenger

- Comb or brush your hair
- Break up fights between your kids
- Put on makeup
- Put on contact lenses or use eye drops
- Shave
- File, clip, or polish your nails?

If you answered yes to any of the above, you are driving while distracted and are at risk of an accident.

Drivers inadvertently sometimes focus their attention away from the roadway thus putting themselves and their families/passengers in jeopardy.

### **How to Avoid Being Distracted**

#### **Stay focused and pay attention!**

- Limit interaction with passengers.
- Avoid talking while driving.
- Avoid taking your eyes off the road.
- Keep both hands on the wheel.

#### **Avoid driver fatigue.**

- Stay focused on the road.
- Don't daydream.
- Don't drive if you are tired.
- Share the driving responsibilities on long trips.

#### **Don't drive when angry or upset.**

- Emotions can interfere with safe driving. Wait until you have cooled down or resolved problems to drive.

#### **Avoid "gawking," or slowing down to look at a crash or other activity.**

- Pay attention to your driving and the traffic around you. Watch out for those other "distracted" drivers.

#### **If you need to use your cell phone while driving:**

- Pull off the road and stop in a safe place before using your phone.
- If you have a passenger let them talk on the phone instead

#### **Article provided by:**

Tom Denny,  
Assistant WA District Educator”