

Driven to Distraction

Illegally using a mobile phone while driving is New Zealand's top distraction – AA Insurance

Auckland – 18 January 2012 – Using a mobile phone to text while driving has been rated the biggest driver distraction by respondents to the AA Insurance Drivers Index, a survey of 3,550 Kiwi drivers aged between 18 and 65.

Before the ban on texting and using a mobile phone without a hands-free kit came into force in November 2009, 22 percent of respondents admitted to texting while driving. Following the ban that number fell to 8 percent, but in 2011 texting while driving is on the rise with 16.2 percent saying they had used their phone to send a text while driving.

The survey also found that talking on a mobile phone without a hands-free kit was rated as the second most common driver distraction. A total of 15.5 percent of drivers agreed that despite the law change, they still often use their mobile phone without a hands-free kit while driving. This has doubled from 7.7 percent in 2010.

“Motorists continue to risk their safety by using a mobile phone while driving,” said Martin Fox, Head of Operations, AA Insurance. “Checking or using your mobile phone while driving has proven to be a major distraction that can result in serious consequences. It was banned in 2009 for a reason and that reason hasn’t changed in 2012.”

A recent AA Insurance claim backs this up. A driver looked down to check his phone after receiving a text. In a split second, he hit the car in front that also hit another. The total cost of the claim was \$10,445.

2011 Top 10 Driver Distractions (based on the 2011 Drivers Index)

1. Texting on a mobile phone
2. Talking on a mobile phone without a hands-free kit
3. Children in the car
4. Using the GPS or navigation system
5. Changing the radio/iPod/MP3 player
6. Talking on a mobile phone with a hands-free kit
7. Passengers
8. Eating while driving
9. People outside the vehicle
10. Billboards/outdoor advertising

Children in the car was rated the third biggest distraction followed by the improper use of a GPS or satellite navigation system. AA Insurance received one claim after a customer

veered off the road and hit a parked car while entering an address into a GPS. The cost of the claim came to \$41,539.

Looking down to change the radio station or skip a song remains a top source of distraction. Another AA Insurance claim involved a driver who took her eyes off the road to look down at her radio. When she looked up, the car in front had stopped. She then crashed into the car in front, which in turn hit another car, which then hit a fourth vehicle. The total cost of this claim was \$20,257.

Eating while driving is also a common distraction. Another AA Insurance claim involved a driver who bent down to stop food from falling in the car. He ended up driving into a parked car resulting in a \$10,310 claim.

“There are enough distractions on the road without drivers adding to them inside the vehicle,” continued Martin. “Keep your mobile on silent and out of the way so you aren’t tempted to check it. If you need to be contactable while driving, only use your mobile phone with a hands-free kit. Simple things like entering an address into a GPS system, deciding on what you’re going to listen to and having your sunglasses at hand before you start your journey can ensure your focus remains on the road.”

ENDS

*Editors’ Note: This information has been compiled and released by **AA Insurance**.*

About AA Insurance

AA Insurance was launched in 1994 and is a joint venture between New Zealand Automobile Association and Suncorp-Metway Limited.

AA Insurance has 500 staff servicing over 250,000 customers and manages around 500,000 policies. Over half of those policies cover motor insurance risks including cars, motorbikes, caravans and motor homes, and the remainder are home and contents insurance.

AA Insurance was named as New Zealand’s best workplace at the 2011 JRA Best Workplaces Survey, winning the overall award and the large company category. In 2008, 2009 and 2010 AA Insurance was a finalist in the medium-large workplace category.

AA Insurance Limited has an A+ (Strong) Insurer Financial Strength Rating given by Standard and Poor’s (Australia) Pty Ltd on 6 January 2012. For further information visit, www.aainsurance.co.nz.

AA Insurance is proud to support youth charity Blue Light as its principle corporate sponsor.

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