

# OUR ROLE IN ENDING DISTRACTED DRIVING

By Patrick Wells

Earlier this year, I co-chaired a large regional golf outing in Central Ohio. Our beneficiary was Dom Tiberi, a local sports broadcaster who lost his 21-year-old daughter to a distracted driving incident. I listened to the pain behind the situation and the alarming statistics: 20 to 30 percent of all collisions involve driver distraction, which is now the leading cause of teen deaths. Drivers who text are 25 times more likely to have an accident, and, on average, nine deaths occur daily from distracted driving.

Driving is dangerous and being focused is primary because now more than ever before, distractions are all around us. We have become overconfident in our abilities to multitask behind the wheel. Today, there are more cars on the road, which only elevates our risk of having an accident. It also slows down commutes, creates stress, and encourages multitasking, all in the car. Even the smallest distraction can have a lifetime of devastating consequences.

While I have never been too concerned about this topic because gosh darn it, I'm a good driver, this isn't about my or your driving skills. You can be the best driver in the world, but when another driver drops his phone on the floor and reaches for it, he takes his eyes of the road for a split second. What if you suddenly stop in front of him? Fortunately, neither you nor the #\$\$% who hit you was seriously injured, but statistics say it could have been much worse. Driving is dangerous, and at all times we need to be alert and defensively prepared to make a move to avoid a potential incident. It only takes one distracted driver in the right place at the right time and suddenly your family could be without you.



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## What Can We Do?

In Central Ohio, the Maria Tiberi Foundation launched a campaign to bring defensive driving to the forefront. Maria Tiberi only had three short years of driving experience; the foundation named after her encourages better defensive driver training. It has provided more than a dozen simulators to local police departments so young people can experience the potential consequences of their actions. While this is a great start, the most important piece behind the foundation is continued awareness of the risks of distracted driving.

As parking professionals, what are we doing, and what can we do to raise awareness? We do a great job of letting people know about our awards, social media campaigns, and sustainable projects, but how many business cards have you seen that say something about driving safely or choosing to not text and drive?



As a median average across the country, distracted or careless driving is a factor in one in four crashes. It is also believed that many of these numbers are vastly underreported due to law enforcement's challenge determining distraction as a crash factor.

Eliminating driver distractions can be achieved only when employers, drivers, and associations work together to create, communicate, and implement clear policies and procedures supported by necessary training and resources, as well as a strong safety culture.

Here are some tips to share with your associates, friends, and family to help stop distraction:

- Spread the word and get involved in promoting safe driving in our industry.
- Have a conversation with your organization, and let employees know that your company supports distraction-free driving. The call or text can wait.
- Show and tell your children the importance of good behavior in a car. Many parents, including me, underestimate how distracting children can be while driving.
- Practice good judgment. When an object such as your phone slides off the seat, pull off the road or wait to find a safe place to retrieve it.
- While it is not directly associated with distracted driving, encourage everyone, especially when you are in a vehicle as a driver or passenger, to buckle up. **P**