

Behind the wheel this holiday weekend? Drive properly

The statistics on [distracted driving](#) are startling. In the United States, for example, the US Department of Transportation statistics indicate that in 2008 nearly 6000 people died and more than half a million were injured in crashes associated with driver distractions of all types. And even though this article relates to the US, it is relevant here in SA.



(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

In South Africa it is very likely that many of our road accidents are also caused by drivers becoming distracted, and with a weekend coming up that many of us will most likely turn into a long weekend by taking off Monday, it's as well to get a reminder on how to drive better.

The AAA projects 34.9 million Americans will travel 80km or more from home this upcoming weekend, many of whom will drive to their destination of choice.

Orthopaedic surgeons are the medical doctors who put bones and limbs back together after traumatic injuries, including road crashes and every day, members of the [American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons](#) (AAOS) and the [Orthopaedic Trauma Association](#) (OTA) see the traumatic injuries caused by distracted drivers. In an effort to keep drivers safe on the roads, and to ensure they get to their destinations in one piece, AAOS and OTA recently launched a national campaign to reduce the incidence of distracted driving.

"Orthopaedic surgeons have a simple message - driving is one of the most important things you do all day - so decide to drive - and give it your full attention," said AAOS president [Daniel J. Berry, MD](#). Kick off the coming summer this coming weekend with a new, safety-focused habit of driving and consciously drive this holiday weekend.

Follow the AAOS's ["Wreck-less" checklist](#):

- Adjust seats, head rests, vehicle controls and mirrors, and fasten your seat belt before you drive;
- Enter the destination address into your GPS system OR review maps and written directions before you drive;
- Do not eat or drink while driving, and move all potential distractions such as reading materials, cell phones, etc., away from easy reach-the point is to keep your eyes on the road; and
- If there is a distraction that needs your immediate attention, we encourage you to first stop your vehicle in a safe area.

In March of 2011, the AAOS commissioned a Harris Interactive Survey, the findings of which revealed how American drivers feel about multitasking, their own behaviour behind the wheel as well as the choices of other drivers.

- Of the more than 1500 driving-age adults surveyed, NONE of them reported their own driving as unsafe. In fact, 83% claim to drive safely. And, yet they believe only 10% of other drivers drive "safely."
- Although drivers are aware that distracted driving compromises the ability of others to drive safely, one in five (20%) agree that they are a good enough driver that they can do other things while driving without compromising their driving ability.

- Among those who self-reported distracted driving behaviours overall, 30-44-year-olds seem to be the worst offenders having more likely admitted to eating or drinking, talking on a cell phone or reaching in the back seat of the car while driving.
- Many drivers that have experienced a near-accident due to their own distracted driving behaviour say they will continue the behaviour that caused them to swerve or slam on the breaks to avoid an accident.
- The results showed that 94% of drivers in America believe that distracted driving is a problem in the US and 89% believe it is a problem within their own communities.

"Our goal is to get all drivers who are used to 'getting away with it' to learn now - not later the hard way - that it isn't worth it," said [Andrew N. Pollak, MD](#), president of the OTA.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>