

It is a problem we have all witnessed: careless and inconsiderate behavior on the road is almost as widespread as cars themselves. But the behaviors that sometimes only amount to minor annoyances for other drivers in the middle of Montana can have devastating consequences when they cause a crash on Pennsylvania's well-traveled roads. A variety of bad habits contribute to car accident risk for commuters and other drivers, especially in more populous states, where more vehicles on the road equals more concentrated danger.

## Some Issues to Watch Out For

Distracted driving is one big contributor to serious accidents. According to information collected from police departments and compiled in the national Fatality Analysis Reporting System, there were 5,474 fatalities nationally in 2009 that involved reports of distracted driving. Almost half a million additional injuries were estimated to have been caused by distracted driving the same year.

So what types of behaviors are leading to these troubling statistics? Texting while driving is one of the most widely-discussed sources of distraction. Indeed, texting behind the wheel combines all three major kinds of distraction: visual (looking away from the road), manual (putting your hands anywhere but on the wheel), and cognitive (thinking about something else). To make matters worse, Pennsylvania has lagged behind other states in imposing bans or restrictions on texting or cell-phone use behind the wheel.

There are also dozens of other troubling distractions to be on the lookout for, besides texting. Eating or drinking, grooming, talking to passengers, fiddling with the audio system, and even reading are common among drivers whose full attention is not focused on the road. Subtler forms of distraction are less easily observable, but can be equally as dangerous, such as daydreaming or preoccupation with personal concerns.

Reckless driving can be just as deadly as distraction. Tailgating, speeding, failure to use turn signals appropriately, and making snap decisions about exiting or stopping are all examples. These risky behaviors can turn into bad habits that aggressive drivers repeat every time they take to the streets.

Drunk driving is also a perennial problem. So is drugged driving.

## If You Have Been Injured

Drivers who cause an accident by being distracted or driving recklessly should be held accountable for any resulting damage or injury. If you have been involved in an accident, contact an attorney to explore your legal rights.