

April 2009

RM News & Notes

Reminder...

Top 10 Tips to Minimize Your Distracted Driving

1. **CHANGE YOUR WAYS** and recognize the activities that distract you; such as eating, conversing on the phone, or changing a CD. Once you recognize these distractions, you can work to eliminate them.

2. **MAKE A PLAN.** Know your route in advance and make sure that you have a good understanding of your directions. Check weather and road conditions. If you are transporting children, make sure that they are all properly buckled up and that you have items to keep them occupied, such as books on tape or soft toys.

3. **MANAGE YOUR TIME** so that you do not have to multi-task or drive aggressively on the road.

4. **DON'T LET YOUR DRIVE TIME BECOME YOUR DOWNTIME.**

Understand that driving is not your "down time" or a time to catch up on phone calls, personal grooming, or dining.

5. **SCAN** the roadway to make sure that you are aware of others on the road at all times. Be prepared for the unpredictability of others.

6. **CONCENTRATE** on your driving. Make sure that you are not upset or tired when getting on the road. This is not the time to have a serious or emotional conversation with your passengers.

7. **PULL OVER** if you need to do something that will take your eyes and/or mind off of the road. Make sure that you find a safe place to pull over first.

8. **REDUCE** the use technology sensibly.

9. **TAKE A REFRESHER CLASS!** Everyone can pick up bad habits through the years. A driver improvement class can raise your awareness and help you assess your driving behaviors.

10. **BUCKLE UP, EVERY TRIP, EVERY TIME.** Making sure that everyone is properly buckled up is the best defense against distracted drivers.

Emergency & Operations Division Risk Management Department

PO Box 498
650-B Ronald Reagan Drive
Evans, Georgia 30809
Fax: 706-868-3343

Darlene M. Bartlett CRM, ARM
Risk Manager

706-868-3363

dbartlett@columbiacountyga.gov

Janice A. Matthews CPS/CAP
Administrative Assistant

706-312-7475

jmatthews@columbiacountyga.gov

Web Page

<http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index.asp?page=2440>

Message from the Risk Manager

It seems to get harder every day to simply drive to your destination without being involved in an accident or at least a "near miss" with another vehicle. Not only are there more cars on the road, but everyone seems to be in a hurry and trying to do two (or more) things at once. We have so much going on and most of us have been driving for so many years that it is easy to let driving become automatic when we really need to be focusing on the constantly changing driving conditions and surroundings so that we can make good decisions and drive safely mile after mile. Remember, only you can control yourself and your vehicle. You must move driving back to the top priority position and pay attention to what you are doing. Take it from someone who has lost a loved one to an avoidable vehicle collision, driving is dangerous. Most of us stand a greater chance of being injured or killed in a vehicle accident than any other daily activity. It pays to take it seriously. So get rid of the distractions, stay focused and drive safely.

Darlene

How To Avoid Being Distracted Stay focused, Pay attention

Limit interaction with passengers

- Avoid talking while driving
- Avoid taking your eyes off the road
- Keep both hands on the wheel
- **Pay attention**



Avoid driver fatigue

- Stay focused on the road
- Don't daydream
- Don't drive if you are tired
- Share driving responsibilities on long trips
- Take a break at least every two hours

Even though research shows that certain influences (such as drowsiness or conversation) may cause greater impairment than driving drunk, over 7 million people believe that their focus is unaffected by these behaviors. A sleepy driver or those going ten miles per hour faster than the cars around them are often a more serious threat to traffic safety than those who are legally intoxicated.

A recent survey by Nationwide Insurance quantified some of the trend's scary dimensions. More than 80 percent of drivers surveyed identified themselves as multitaskers. Sixty-eight percent eat while driving; texting or instant-messaging while driving, or fixing hair, is practiced by 19 percent of drivers; 14 percent comfort or discipline children while behind the wheel; and 8 percent drive with a pet in their laps.

Don't drive when angry or upset

Emotions can interfere with safe driving. Wait until you have cooled down or resolved problems to drive. Or better yet, have someone else drive for you. Any time your mind is occupied with overwrought emotions, you aren't paying attention to your driving. Let's face it, driving is the most dangerous thing that we do on a daily basis – we've got to focus and consciously make good decisions, always looking for the unexpected. No matter how bad your mood or the situation you are in: it can always get worse – and a crash will get you there.

Avoid "gawking"

Avoid slowing down to look at a crash or other activity. Drivers inadvertently sometimes focus their attention away from the roadway, putting themselves and their families/passengers in jeopardy.

Phone call or text on communication device: Best save this task for when you can safely compose a note. If you can say it in a text, the message can wait until you're parked. Typing *while* you're driving? Not a good idea – you only have two hands, and they're better off on the steering wheel. Pull off the road and stop in a safe place before using your phone. If you cannot resist this habit – keep your phone in the trunk. Studies indicate that drivers distracted by their cell phones while driving are more impaired than those drivers with a 0.8 blood alcohol content level. We've all shared the road at one point or another with those preoccupied drivers who give a whole new meaning to the term "multi-tasking."

Painting nails, putting on makeup styling, spraying or curling hair and shaving: All it takes is that couple of seconds you look in the mirror for a collision to happen. Besides, what's it going to hurt to just pretty yourself up when you get to your destination, before you get out of the car? Or better yet, give yourself a few extra minutes before you even get in the car to finish getting ready.

Reading newspaper, directions or map: Map out your location and get a good idea of where you're heading before you get in your car, or pull over if you need to take a closer look at your flight plan while en route. Map sites like [Google Maps](#) and [MapQuest](#) make getting lost a thing of the past by giving you turn-by-turn directions to your destination.

Taking it to go: Sometimes you only have so much time to enjoy a meal so it's yet another visit to the drive-thru for you. But instead of juggling your soda with your fries with your burger, wait until you're parked before you chow down. If not, you might find yourself in a situation in which the only recipe you're enjoying is one for disaster. It's hard to give the road the attention it needs when you're focused on "feeding your face" and not spilling on yourself.

Chatting with friends: Turns out, drivers with passengers tend to get in more accidents than those driving alone. This makes sense, since there's nothing like a friend to tease you or say something compelling to get you to take your eyes off the road. And, sure, no one wants to be "no fun" in the car, but when you're behind the wheel, it's OK to tell your friends, "Shut it, I'm driving."

Fidgeting with the controls: It's only natural to want to fine-tune your situation while you're on the road, but spend too much time messing with the controls and you could be messing with danger. Want to turn down the thermostat, flick on cruise control or hit the recirculation button while behind the wheel? Then memorize the layout of the controls beforehand so that you can program, turn things on and off, and switch functions without even looking at the dash.

Playing DJ: There's nothing like cruising to your favorite songs. But that split-second you lean over to change that CD or switch to a different radio station is just enough time for an accident to happen. To prevent this, invest in a CD changer with your albums of choice at the ready. And program your favorite radio stations into the presets so you don't have to use the "Seek" or "Tune" buttons to scroll through them. If you have an iPod and your car is equipped with an auxiliary input or you have another way to hook up your iPod, create a playlist of fave tunes to cruise to so you're not scrolling through the menus as you drive.

Secondary activities causing distracted driving are only going to increase as we continue to get more and more devices in our vehicles. TVs, DVD players, on-board navigation systems, on-board computers – almost anything you can do in your home or office, you can do in your car. Remember that driving is the most dangerous thing that most of us do on a regular basis so stay focused, alert and drive as if your life depends on it: because it does.

Policy Highlight

Risk Management Safety and Loss Prevention Manual Page 55

A. GENERAL POLICY:

1. Columbia County vehicles are easily identified as such and thus constitute a traveling advertisement seen by many citizens. In their relationship with other motorists and pedestrians while operating vehicles, the employee controls an important influence on public relations. By applying courteous, considerate driving habits employees can build good public relations if they apply the principles of defensive driving to avoid accidents.
2. Only employees may drive Columbia County vehicles. Non-employee passengers are to be approved by the Department Head. Out of area trips with non-employees are to be approved by the Department Head and Risk Management Office. A rights waiver form must be signed by all non-employee passengers prior to being allowed to ride in a county vehicle.
3. All drivers of Columbia County vehicles will abide by the laws, regulations and directives of Georgia traffic laws, signs, signals and markings.
4. All drivers of Columbia County vehicles will exercise "due care" in the operation of their vehicle; specifically, the driver must operate his or her vehicle as a prudent person would in a given situation, seeking to avoid unreasonable risk of harm to themselves and others. This provision applies to emergency vehicles and non-emergency vehicles.

Discussion points regarding this Policy:

Many people feel very anonymous when behind the wheel of a car and accordingly, their behavior takes a noticeable turn for the worse. For example: that individual who will go out of his/her way to open a door for you will speed up and cut you off when you are trying to merge into traffic. County employees don't have the comfort of being anonymous. Our vehicles are clearly marked as such and your actions, especially if they are less than commendable, are noted and often reported. Even if another motorist is the cause of a problem, you must control your emotions and actions so that you can always respond in a courteous, considerate and professional manner.

Never allow a non-employee to drive your county vehicle: even just to move it out of the way or for short trips. If you are authorized to drive a vehicle home, put the keys away where no one else has easy access to prevent unauthorized use. Also note that passengers who are not employees require the approval of your department head and a waiver form must be signed (available on the Risk Management website / forms). Generally, this means no family members or friends routinely riding in the county vehicle such as to drop off at school, pick up from daycare or just wanting to go with you to an after-hOurs call.

Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to employees of Columbia County Board of Commissioners and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

Pre-registration is required.

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

Safety Review Board April 16, 2009

Defensive Driving April 21, 2009

Course – 8 hour May 14, 2009

June 25, 2009

Defensive Driving May 19, 2009

Course – 4 hour

CPR/AED/First Aid June 16, 2009

County Offices Closed May 25, 2009

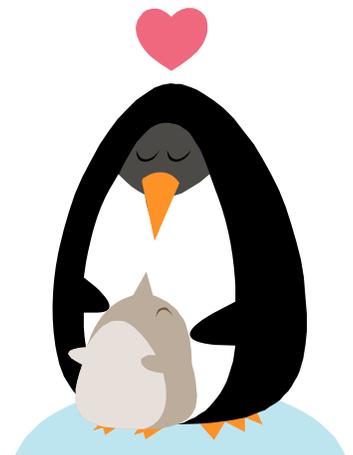
Newsy Notes

Happy Easter April 12th



Mother's Day

May 10th



APRIL 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

MAY 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

JUNE 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				