



Transportation Seminar Series Fall 2009

Sponsored by the *Center for Transportation Studies & Oregon Transportation Research and Education Consortium Visiting Scholar Program*

The Multi-Tasking Driver: Are We Being Driven to Distraction?

David Strayer, Professor of Psychology at the University of Utah

Driver distraction accounts for up to 30 % of accidents on the roadway. One of the leading causes of driver distraction is the concurrent use of a cell phone to talk or text message. In fact, accident rates are quadrupled for drivers talking on a cell phone and increase by a factor of 8 for those drivers texting. I will show that these impairments are primarily due to limitations in attention, and as such are not eliminated with hands-free devices. Cell phones cause a form of inattention blindness, wherein drivers look but fail to see important information in the driving environment, such as a child in a crosswalk. These impairments differ qualitatively from other seemingly similar sources of distraction (e.g., listening to the radio or books on tape, talking to a passenger, etc.) and are similar to the impairments associated with driving drunk. Efforts to practice away the dual-task interference have proven unsuccessful indicating that you cannot train yourself to become an expert cell phone driver. However, there are intriguing individual differences for a very small group of "super-taskers" who can, in fact, drive and talk on a cell phone with little or no impairment. Together these data have important implications for theories of attention and cognitive control and also help to inform legislative initiatives on the topic.



**Friday, Oct 30 2009, 12:00 – 1:00pm
Urban Center, Room 204, Portland State University**

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