

Distracted Driving Blamed for Increase in Pedestrian Deaths



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Pedestrian fatality data is in for 2016 and it doesn't look very good. The number of pedestrians killed in car accidents is rising much faster than the rate of motorist fatalities and the latest studies are attributing the rise in deaths to distracted driving. With the introduction of new mobile technologies both behind the wheel and handheld, more drivers than ever are being tempted to turn their attention from the road onto something else. Some may argue that the increased fatality rate is actually linked to lower gas prices and more cars on the road, but researchers believe the evidence points more solidly to distraction than all other factors.

Pedestrian Fatalities Have Climbed Eleven Percent

Last year, over 6,000 pedestrians were killed in collisions with automobiles. This represents the greatest number of pedestrian deaths in over twenty years. While it is true that an increased number of vehicles on the road and the inclination of drivers to drive more often while gas prices are low are possible contributing

factors, no factor seems to have as great of an impact than distraction.

The spike in year to year fatalities we've seen is the greatest in 40 years, and the second greatest spike in this time frame was in 2015. In this same time period, we've seen more mobile technology hit the market than ever before. Cell phones, tablets, music players and other mobile devices have been becoming nearly ubiquitous, but new car features themselves are also adding to the distraction.

Illinois One of Safest States for Pedestrians

The State of Illinois saw a decrease in pedestrian fatalities, but 70 people still died in pedestrian accidents in 2016 here. While the nation recorded 1.75 deaths per 100,000 residents, Illinois fared better at a rate of 1.17 per 100,000. This is still an unacceptably high rate, however, and more needs to be done to ensure the safety of those using our roads— whether on foot or behind the wheel.

Pedestrians are as distracted as Drivers

While much attention has been placed on distraction behind the wheel, researchers are finding that pedestrians themselves are often distracted as wheel, with their eyes glued to a device as they walk to their destinations. This may cause them to walk across the street when they do not have a crosswalk or traffic signal to protect them. Not being aware of their surroundings is becoming a contributing factor for many pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

The National Transportation Safety Board noted that drivers and pedestrians alike were far more alert during a time when computing technology was not yet capable of putting such powerful and small devices into our hands. As our technology continues to evolve, so does our responsibility for using it in a safe manner.

If you have lost a loved one in a pedestrian accident and believe that distraction played a role in the events, you may be able to recover compensation. It is now possible to use phone records and other evidence to determine whether the driver was talking or texting while operating the vehicle. If this is the case, you can argue that the driver was breaking laws regarding talking and texting behind the wheel and therefore liable for your loved one's death.

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- <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>
 - <http://www.nsc.org/learn/NSC-Initiatives/Pages/distracted-driving.aspx>
 - https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/

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