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Letter: Distractions are killers on the highway

7 hrs ago

Every time you get behind the wheel, you encounter potential dangers over which you have no control.

Traffic, weather and other drivers can affect whether you get there safely and all you can do is react as best you can.

But there are other risks drivers can eliminate. You have choices and one of the most important is to focus on the road and ignore distractions.

The Illinois Insurance Association (IIA) is partnering with law enforcement and community leaders in April to observe Distracted Driving Month. We've joined this effort because we know the consequences of distracted driving; 3,744 lives lost and 391,000 injuries nationally in 2015 alone were attributed to crashes.

When you read or type an average text on the highway, you're driving the length of a football field without looking at the road or the cars around you.

But texting isn't the only distraction. Eating, adjusting the radio, setting your GPS or talking to passengers can impair your focus. A Texas A&M study found voice-to-text is not significantly safer than manual texting, and AAA's foundation for Traffic Safety discovered reaction times slow and brain function is compromised even when drivers use hands-free technologies.

When driving, you have only one job - getting to your destination safely. Everything else can wait.

IIA believes decreasing the death toll requires greater public awareness and consistent law enforcement. The best line of defense is the good choices drivers make every day.

Kevin Martin