

NHTSA studies contradict the AAA Foundation Study:

The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#) has issued a 281 page report titled **Visual-Manual NHTSA Driver Distraction Guidelines for In-Vehicle Electronic Devices**. These guidelines identify the fundamental principles that the guidelines address:

1. The driver's eyes should usually be looking at the road ahead;
2. The driver should be able to keep at least one hand on the steering wheel while performing a secondary task (both driving-related and non-driving-related);
3. The distraction induced by any secondary task performed while driving should not exceed that associated with a baseline reference task (manual radio tuning);
4. Any task performed by the driver should be interruptible at any time;
5. The driver, not the system/device, should control the pace of task interactions, and
6. Displays should be easy for the driver to see and content presented should be easily discernable.

It also identifies a set of activities that inherently interfere with a driver's ability to safely operate the vehicle:

1. Displaying video not related to driving;
2. Displaying certain graphical or photographic images;
3. Displaying automatically scrolling text;
4. Manual text entry for the purpose of text-based messaging, other communication, or internet browsing; and
5. Displaying text for reading from books, periodical publications, web page content, social media content, text-based advertising and marketing, or text-based messages.

The NHTSA Guidelines recommend that in-vehicle devices be designed so that they cannot be used by the driver to perform these inherently distracting activities while driving.

For all other visual-manual secondary tasks, the NHTSA Guidelines specify two test methods for measuring the impact of performing a task on driving safety.

Also released in April 2013 was a comprehensive 273 page study titled [The Impact of Hand-Held And Hands-Free Cell Phone Use on Driving Performance and Safety-Critical Event Risk Final Report](#). **The summary findings of this report are:**

7.4 Summary

The results from this study present a clear finding: VM subtasks performed on HH cell phones degrade driver performance and increase SCE risk. Talking on a cell phone, regardless of the type of interface, was not associated with an increased SCE risk. Pure PHF and IHF cell phone use – where VM HH cell phone subtasks are excluded – were also not associated with an increased SCE risk. Although current HF interfaces allow drivers to communicate with their voice, there is a concern that they still allow, and sometimes require, VM HH cell phone subtasks. Drivers can, and frequently do, initiate HF calls, text/browse during HF calls, and end HF calls with an HH cell phone. HF interfaces also require that drivers enable a Bluetooth connection, pair their cell phone, and manually dial if their voice commands are not recognized. Approximately half of the hands-free cell phone interactions in this study were found to involve a VM HH cell phone subtask. Such VM HH cell phone subtasks detract from the goal of true HF cell phone use. Furthermore, there is a segment of the driving population which primarily uses a cell phone to exchange text messages. Various HF interfaces do not address this type of cell phone use.

VM – Visual manual, HH – Handheld, SCE – safety-critical event, PHF – portable hands-free, IHF – integrated hands-free

Note in particular the finding that “Approximately half of the hands-free cell phone interactions in this study were found to involve a VM HH cell phone subtask.” This means that half the time that a hand-held phone is being used, it is not providing a true hands-eyes free capability. The opportunity for the industry is to meet this challenge by providing much improved hands-free

technology functionality and is clearly what needs to be done to further improve the safety capability that is provided by HF technology.