

What was John doing with his passenger's mobile phone — looking at a photo or a text message? Diverting his attention for only a moment, the Toyota Hiace van he was driving drifted off a bend on a quiet country road, rolled down a ditch and slammed into a gum tree. John was killed instantly, along with the 19-year-old apprentice electrician sitting beside him. John was still clutching the phone in his left hand when medics arrived at the mangled wreck in central Victoria, on a Tuesday afternoon in May.

Did you know?

- 1,292 people died on Australian roads in 2012
- For the 12 months ended June 2013 the number of people who have died on Australian roads is 1,274
- In 2013 the greatest number of deaths by age group is 40 to 59 years
- Approximately 12% of road deaths in 2013 were pedestrians
- Data from the Australian Safety and Compensation Council indicates that vehicle accidents represent 42% of all compensated work fatalities
- Work-related road crashes incur a greater average time lost in worker absence than any other workplace claim
- Vehicle crashes are twice as likely to result in death or permanent disability as any other form of workplace incident

Australian and international studies have shown that drivers commonly engage in **DISTRACTING** activities while driving, and that distraction is a contributing factor in 14–21% of crashes (McEvoy 2007). In simple terms, a 'distracted driver' gives less than appropriate attention and participation to driving activities (Ranney et al. 2000; Stutts et al. 2001).

Deaths by road user for 12 months ended June 2013*

	Driver	Passenger	Pedestrian	Motorcyclist	Cyclist	Total
2013	636	243	149	200	38	1,274 ^a

* Statistical summary sourced from the Department of Infrastructure and Transport - Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics

^a Includes deaths of unknown road user type

Distraction defined

"A diversion of attention from driving, because the driver is temporarily focusing on an object, person, task, or event not related to driving, which reduces the driver's awareness, decision making, and/or performance, leading to an increased risk of corrective actions, near-crashes, or crashes".

In-car distractions

Non driving specific activities that can and do distract us while driving include:

- using mobile or other electronic devices
- adjusting entertainment system
- eating or smoking
- interacting with people, pets etc.
- adjusting the air con
- reading a map or magazine
- reaching to secure or find an object
- fixing hair and / or make-up

The graph below shows the deterioration in driver reaction times when texting. The results published by the Transport Research Laboratory in the UK are staggering - reaction times when texting deteriorated by 35% compared to a drunk driver at 12% and driving under the influence of cannabis at 21%.

