



## Distracted driving

Overall, the number of car crash fatalities across North America is falling thanks to safer drivers, vehicles and roads, but driver distraction as a proportion of fatalities is growing.

Using ICBC data and estimates from other jurisdictions, ICBC conservatively estimates that distracted driving is a contributing factor in roughly 25 to 33 per cent of crashes reported to ICBC.

B.C. is not alone in identifying distracted driving as a leading road safety issue – other provinces and countries are also dealing with this growing problem.

### Leading research from around the world:

- A study from the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators shows that B.C. has the highest observed rate of personal electronic devices (PEDs) by drivers among Canadian provinces (B.C. was 5.5 per cent; Canadian average was 4.4 per cent).
- The risks associated with the use of PEDs while driving are well documented:
  - A study from the National Safety Council in the U.S. estimates 25 per cent of all crashes involve the use of cellphones.
  - A recent study found that cell phone use increased the risk of an at-fault crash by 70 per cent,<sup>1</sup> especially among middle-aged drivers, while other studies have placed the crash risk while texting as high as 23 times for operators of commercial vehicles.<sup>2</sup>
- The intuitive relationship between a reduction in the use of PEDs and crashes was highlighted when BlackBerry services were cut for three days in the Middle East in 2011: crashes were reduced by 20 per cent in the Kingdom of Dubai and by 40 per cent in Abu Dhabi.
- Despite these high numbers, the available literature on distracted driving suggests distracted driving is under-reported. This is a view supported by police in B.C. When police attend the scene of a serious crash, it's often very difficult to prove distraction was the cause.
- A landmark study conducted in the U.S. by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found driver distraction or inattention was a factor in 93 per cent of rear-end crashes, 80 per cent of all crashes and 65 per cent of near crashes.
  - The study also found that in 86 per cent of rear-end crashes involving distraction, the following distance prior to the crash was actually greater than the generally accepted safe following distance of two seconds, which demonstrates the effect on reaction times for distracted drivers.
- In B.C., most rear-end crashes resulting in injuries are caused by distracted drivers according to ICBC data.

### Ipsos Reid survey conducted on behalf of ICBC (July 2014):

- B.C. drivers consider texting while driving to be more risky than drinking and driving.
- 57 per cent of B.C. drivers consider texting while at an intersection or stop sign to be risky behaviour.
- Overall, 89 per cent of B.C. drivers own a cell phone and 38 per cent of this group say that they have used their cell phone while driving.
- Eighty-four per cent of B.C. drivers who own cell phones agree that texting and driving is risky, however, 25 per cent still admit to texting and driving.

<sup>1</sup> Asbridge et al, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Fitch et al 2013; Hickman, Hanowski & Bocanegra, 2010.