

# Safety FOCUSED

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## The Risk of Using a Phone While Driving

No matter whether your phone is handheld or hands-free—using it while driving puts you in danger.

## Avoid Repetitive Strain Injuries from Keyboards

Use this helpful guidance to avoid developing a repetitive strain injury while sitting in front of your computer.

A monthly safety newsletter from  
**Crendon Insurance Brokers Limited**

## The Risk of Using a Phone While Driving

Using a handheld phone while driving nearly doubles your risk of being in an accident, according to recent research conducted by telematics data firm Wunelli. And, using a handheld phone or similar devices while driving is illegal. However, many drivers aren't aware that using a hands-free phone increases the probability of being involved in a collision as well—by as much as 20 per cent.

Using a phone while driving clearly carries serious risk, whether it is lawful or not. Research from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents shows that drivers who use phones while driving are four times more likely to crash, injure or kill themselves and/or other people. That same research found that drivers who use mobile phones, whether those are hand-held or hands-free, experience the following:

- An inability to see road signs
- An increased likelihood of tailgating the vehicle in front
- An increased likelihood of entering unsafe gaps in traffic
- Increased stress and frustration

While on the phone, you may go into 'autopilot' and not focus on the potential risks. This is reflected in Wunelli's research, which shows that using a phone while driving increases hard

braking (a hard and sudden stop) by 75 per cent. Besides reducing the amount of time that you have to avoid potential risks—such as an animal sprinting in front of the vehicle or rubbish blowing into the road—hard braking is rough on your brakes, and shortens their lifespan and overall quality.

In addition, if you drive a vehicle for work, you are responsible for following all driving regulations, and for being an attentive and responsible driver. If you are caught using a hand-held phone while you are behind the wheel, you could receive three penalty points on your licence and a fine of £100. That amount increases to £2,500 for drivers of buses and commercial goods. Even if you are using your phone while stopped at traffic lights or queuing in traffic, you could still be fined.

For that reason, even if you are just commuting to and from work, be aware of your surroundings. To ensure that you remain safe while behind the wheel, make the conscious decision not to use your mobile—even if it is hands-free. Instead, wait until you have arrived at your destination to make or return any phone calls. However, if there is an absolute emergency and you do have to make a call or answer the phone, pull onto the shoulder first.

**Hand-held phones are most often used on roads with posted speed limits under 40 mph, which have 11 times more accidents than roads with higher speed limits, according to Wunelli.**



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## Avoid Repetitive Strain Injuries from Keyboards

Typing is a common and necessary requirement for a variety of positions across all industries. However, despite it being seemingly innocuous, long hours at the keyboard can contribute to the development of a repetitive strain injury (RSI). RSI is a general term used to describe the pain felt in muscles, nerves and tendons caused by repetitive movement and overuse. It mostly affects the upper body, such as forearms, elbows, wrists and hands, as well as the neck and shoulders. RSIs can cause aching, pulsing, or tingling pain and weakness. Left untreated, these injuries may become debilitating.

While the symptoms can last for years, there are quick, simple solutions that you can implement to reduce your risk of developing an RSI.

### Keyboard Tips

- When you type, make sure your wrists are parallel with your forearms to ensure that there is no added strain.
- Adjust the height and angle of the keyboard until it is level with your hands. The position should not require you to angle your wrists.

### Mouse Tips

- Try to keep your wrist at a level position when you are moving the mouse, similar to where it rests while you type.
- Rely more on keyboard shortcuts to execute commands such as 'copy', 'paste' and 'undo'.
- Use the arrow keys on your keyboard's number pad to move the pointer around the screen rather than using the mouse.

### General Tips

- Take a five-minute break every 30 minutes to stretch and relax.
- Practise good posture—do not slouch. This may require you to adjust your chair until your feet are flat on the ground.
- Eat a balanced diet and regularly exercise—at least two and a half hours per week.



## Safety in NUMBERS 123

**64 per cent** of surveyed motorists saw at least one driver using a mobile phone illegally during their last hour on the road.



Source: RAC

## Real-life Case Study

Thomas is an accountant for a small firm just outside of London, and each day, for at least eight hours, he is busily taking notes and typing up reports. In November, Thomas noticed a low, pulsing pain in his wrists and forearms. He ignored it for a few weeks, thinking that aspirin would take care of it, but it just got worse.

So, in early January, Thomas went to see his GP. After discussing his symptoms, the GP diagnosed him with an RSI. The GP prescribed a series of stretches to help the affected muscles and tendons, and suggested that Thomas make several simple adjustments to his workstation.

The next day, Thomas made the recommended adjustments to his workstation. He reoriented his keyboard so that his wrists and forearms were level when he typed, readjusted his chair so he was sitting up straight and took regular breaks to stretch.

After several months of following his GP's recommendations, Thomas' pain is now gone.

