Rocking Out Has Repercussions

Safety Talk

Electronics technology has progressed so quickly that instant messaging, the Internet and credit-card sized music players are now in the hands of millions of North Americans. Workplace regulations concerning the use of electronic devices are a hot-button issue. Musical distractions in vehicles, however, are almost impossible to regulate.

What's at Stake

Very few people drive a vehicle in absolute silence. Listening to audio during car trips may boost energy and focus concentration. However, workers who do not strike a balance between listening to audio and paying attention to the road endangering not only themselves, but others around them.

Furthermore, studies show that listening to music with a quick tempo is also detrimental to driving safely, because people doing so tend to speed. The combination of not paying attention and speeding exponentially raises one's chances of getting into an accident. The same studies promote soft rock as viable listening material for a safe car trip.

What Can Go Wrong

A 26-year-old man from Santa Cruz, CA, was listening to a rock album on his car's CD player. He wasn't paying attention to his driving and was also exceeding the speed limit. He did not see that traffic had slowed in front of him and slammed his car into the van in front of him.

How to Protect Yourself

According to studies, 91.4 percent of drivers are fiddling with music or audio controls while they drive and 78 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near crashes are caused by some type of material distraction. To ensure that you are driving safely, avoid

adjusting equipment while moving in traffic. Listen to your favorite radio station and resist changing the channel.

If the vehicle you are driving has a CD changer, load several CDs into it. If not, pull over before swapping CDs in a single-disc player. If you are using an MP3 player, compose a playlist that will last for the duration of your travels.

Load several CDs into a CD changer, or compose an MP3 playlist that will last for the duration of the car ride.

Don’t blast the volume, because you won’t hear important sounds around you, such as sirens on emergency vehicles. Listening to music that does not alter your heart beat is ideal, because if the music speeds up, your driving speed will likely move into the illegal zone.

Final Word

Many workplaces now have policies in place regarding the use of cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and MP3 players. But if you are driving as part of your job, it’s your responsibility to use electronic devices responsibly. A freeway is no place to have music dampening your senses. You need to be paying attention to your personal safety and driving defensively to protect the safety of others around you.