

Car technology worsens driver distraction

By Joan Lowy, AP

The infotainment technology that automakers are cramming into the dashboard of new vehicles is making drivers take their eyes off the road and hands off the wheel for dangerously long periods of time, an AAA study says.

The study released last week is the latest by University of Utah Professor David Strayer, who has been examining the impact of infotainment systems on safety for AAA's Foundation for Traffic Safety since 2013. Past studies also identified problems, but Strayer said the "explosion of technology" has made things worse.

Automakers now include more options to allow drivers to use social media, email and text. The technology is also becoming more complicated to use. Cars used to have a few buttons and knobs. Some vehicles now have as many as 50 buttons on the steering wheel and dashboard that are multi-functional. There are touch screens, voice commands, writing pads, heads-up displays on windshields and mirrors and 3-D computer-generated images.

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