

In an increasingly distracted society, drivers often wear headphones, and talk or text behind the wheel. That’s why Nebraska Operation Lifesaver and the state Office of Highway Safety, in their effort to make Nebraska roads and highways safer, are reminding drivers of the danger of distracted driving this holiday season.

A new public-information campaign by Nebraska Operation Lifesaver highlights the many ways drivers become distracted near train tracks—from switching the radio station, to reading a text message, to talking with a passenger. The campaign will encourage drivers with the tag line, “Stay focused. Stay Alive.”

More than 40 collisions were reported at Nebraska railroad crossings in 2009. Nine people died, and 18 others were injured. Distracted driving is considered a leading cause of car-train collisions.

“The job of a driver is to drive and any distraction puts themselves, their passengers, and others on the road at increased risk for a crash.” said Fred Zwonechek, director of the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety. “Safe driving demands making split-second decisions, so you can’t afford to be distracted at any time.”

Nebraska Operation Lifesaver encourages drivers to always expect a train at any crossing, and to avoid all distractions to stay focused. That means putting away cell phones or other electronic devices near railroad tracks.

For more information and safety tips for motorists and pedestrians, log on to www.oli.org.