



Helping to make your workplace a safe place
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ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS:

DRIVING SAFETY

Cell phone use and texting are two of the most common distractions that contribute to vehicle crashes.

We dedicated a newsletter to this topic a few years ago, but feel it is worth a reminder. Recently, we have seen an increase in "Cell Phone Policies" becoming a key recommendation on Loss Control surveys. By readdressing this topic, we hope to assist you in implementing your own policy.

Employees who use cell phones while driving expose themselves and others to a significant safety risk. If a tool used by employees exposes them to a four times greater risk of injury, business owners should establish rules and guidelines to help reduce that risk. Businesses should take action to protect their employees. **Distracted Driving Policies should be a part of every Safety and Injury Prevention Program.**

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Myths and Facts about Distracted Driving:

MYTH: Most car crashes are caused by car malfunctions such as faulty brakes, blown tires or engine problems.

FACT: As many as 90% of all crashes are caused by driver error or distraction. Vehicle problems represent a small portion of vehicle crashes. Most vehicle problems have to do with the condition or improper inflation of tires.

Drivers using cell phones are four times as likely to be in a crash, due to their inability to respond or delayed response to hazards. Studies show drivers talking on cell phones can miss seeing up to 50 percent of the roadway signs, signals, pedestrians, and cyclists.

MYTH: I have an "infotainment" system in my dashboard, so it's safe for me to talk or text because it is hands-free.

FACT: Voice texting features have been found by some research to be more distracting than typing because the voice-to-text features require drivers to look at dashboard screens to see the translated messages to be sure they are correct.

Drivers also are also distracted because they're focused on talking and then fixing the message errors, resulting in slower reactions or completely missing hazards on the road.

MYTH: I am a pro at multi-tasking. Driving and talking on the phone is like walking and chewing gum.

FACT: For tasks that are mentally challenging, the brain does not multi-task; it juggles the tasks.

Human brains do not perform two tasks at the same time. Instead, the brain handles tasks sequentially, switching between one task and another. Brains can juggle tasks very rapidly, which leads us to erroneously believe we are doing two tasks at the same time. In reality, the brain is switching attention between tasks – performing only one task at a time.



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Cell phones first gained popularity as a business tool in the 1980s when they were called 'car phones.' Early adopters saw the potential in using their time on the road to communicate with anyone, anywhere. Now, research shows that cell phones can significantly impair driving skills. This impairment, combined with the large numbers of drivers using cell phones, significantly increases the risk of crashes.

Companies with strong safety cultures take action by reducing risk in areas that protect their employees and the communities in which they operate. CEOs of leading companies committed to best practices in safety understand that safety is good business.

Banning the use of cell phones while driving is a risk reduction effort. Employers have an obligation to protect their employees and others with whom they share the roads. The best action for employers is to implement a total ban policy that includes handheld and hands-free devices and prohibits all employees from using cell phones while driving. This policy should be reinforced throughout the year with education.

With the cell phone's origin as a corporate productivity tool, the concern that prohibiting its use while driving could affect productivity is understandable. However most employers with total ban cell phone policies report that the policies do not adversely impact productivity. Some even report that productivity improves.

Several research studies found that the risk of a crash is four times as likely when a person is using a cell phone – handheld or hands-free.^{6,7} Cell phone distraction involves all types of driver distractions: visual, manual and cognitive. More than 30 research studies have found that hands-free devices offer no safety benefit, because hands-free devices do not eliminate the cognitive distraction of conversation.⁸

Implementing enforced total ban policies can help protect employees from crashes and injury, and help protect employers from liability. An employer may be held legally accountable for negligent employee actions if the employee was acting within the scope of his or her employment at the time of a crash. The key phrase "acting within the scope of his or her employment" can and has been defined broadly in cases of crashes involving cell phones.

Establishing a Cell Phone Policy

While the utilization of cell phones in the workplace may increase productivity by allowing employees to remain in constant communication, it also raises several safety issues. This is especially true in the case of cell phone usage while driving a company vehicle or a customer's vehicle.

Recent studies suggest that as much as half of all cell phone usage is done while operating a vehicle. Every employer needs to be aware of the liability issues that can arise should an employee be involved in an accident while driving a company vehicle or customer's vehicle.

Many businesses are now establishing "Cell Phone Policies" to address this issue. **Please see page 3 for an example policy.**

The BEST cell phone policies cover:

- All employees
- All handheld and hands-free devices
- All work-related communications, even in personal vehicles or on personal cell phones
- All company vehicles
- All company mobile phone devices

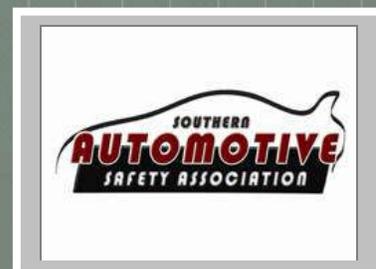
DRIVING DOWN DISTRACTION

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

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CELL PHONE POLICY

We deeply value the safety and well-being of all employees. Due to the increasing number of accidents resulting from the use of cell phones while driving, we are instituting a new policy.

1. Employees are not permitted to use a cell phone, either handheld or hands-free, while operating a motor vehicle on company business and/or on company time. This includes, but is not limited to test-driving customer's vehicles before, during and after repairs.
2. Employees are not permitted to read or respond to emails or text messages while operating a motor vehicle on company business and/or on company time.
3. This policy also applies to use of PDAs.
4. While driving, calls cannot be answered and must be directed to voice mail.
5. If an employee must make an emergency call (911), the vehicle should first be parked in a safe location.

Employees will be given two warnings. The third time an employee is found to be in violation of this policy, it is grounds for immediate dismissal.

Your signature below certifies your agreement to comply with this policy.

Employee Signature

Date