



The Cost of Being Connected

Do you ever check texts or make phone calls while you're driving?

Do you ever type texts or adjust your GPS unit while you're driving?

Are you really concentrating on your driving when that phone call or text comes in?

As a society, we are increasingly dependent on staying connected even while we are in our vehicles...but at what ultimate cost? Using devices like cell phones while driving may put the driver's life or the lives of others at risk. As a business owner, you should have a distracted driving policy in place to protect both your company and your customers.

TYPES OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

When we take our minds off the task of driving safely, we are engaging in "distracted driving."

There are three main types of distracted driving:

1. **Visual:** Taking your eyes off the road
2. **Manual:** Taking your hands off the wheel
3. **Cognitive:** Taking your mind off the task of driving safely



REDUCE THE POTENTIAL OF ACCIDENTS

Companies should take the following steps to reduce the potential for accidents:

- Update company safety manuals and employee handbooks to include your company's position and commitment to preventing distracted driving, especially cell phone use and texting while driving. A sample "Distracted Driving Policy Statement" is provided below.
- Know and follow state and local laws regarding cell phone use and texting while driving.
- Provide employee training on the risks of distracted driving and include this training as part of your fleet safety program.
- Ask employees and volunteers who drive for your organization to sign a pledge stating they will never text while driving and will comply with company guidelines for cell phone, GPS, and other electronic device use when driving.

ALARMING FACTS

- Drivers using hand-held devices are four times as likely to have serious accidents. (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- Of those killed in accidents involving distracted driving, 995 involved reports of a cell phone as a distraction. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)
- Using a cell phone while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08%. (University of Utah)
- There is an increase in legal actions against businesses that have employees in accidents where "Distracted Driving" was a cause. (*Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Feb 2005*).

SAMPLE DISTRACTED DRIVING POLICY STATEMENT

(This Sample Policy is only a sample and should not be considered legal advice nor legally binding. Consult legal counsel for an actual Distracted Driving Policy.)

Cell Phone and Electronic Equipment Use:

Using cell phones, GPS devices, laptop computers, and similar devices can be dangerous while operating a vehicle since it takes your attention away from driving safely. We are committed to providing a safe workplace, and this includes employees who are driving company or personal vehicles for company business.

The following distracted driving policy has been adopted by [Company Name] and should be followed:

1. The use of a company issued cell phone or personal cell phone is prohibited when the vehicle is in motion [including/except for] the use of a "hands-free" device.
2. Electronic equipment for the purpose of accessing e-mail, internet applications, calendars and other non-vital applications are prohibited while the vehicle is in motion.
3. If a phone call is required or a call needs to be answered, pull off the road to a safe, well-lit area to make or take a call.
4. Input all destination points into your GPS device before you leave your current location.
5. Change your voicemail message letting customers and co-workers know that you will return calls when it is safe to do so.

[Company Name] is committed to the safety of our employees and our community. We will support the practice of "[no/no handheld] calls" and "no texts" when operating vehicles. Violations of this policy will lead to disciplinary actions. [Insert Company Disciplinary Actions]

By signing, you acknowledge that you have read and fully understand [Company Name]'s Cell Phone and Electronic Equipment Use Policy. Please sign this form and return it to [insert Person/Title responsible]. A copy of this form will be placed in your personnel file. If you have any questions regarding this Policy, please contact [Person/Title responsible for policy enforcement].

I have read and received a written copy of the [Company Name] Cell Phone and Electronic Equipment Use Policy. I fully understand the terms of this policy and agree to follow them.

Contact your Selective agent or Safety Management Specialist to learn more about our fleet safety programs.