

Information you should know

DISTRACTED DRIVING

According to the National Safety Council, more than 320 million people have cell phones in the US today. Approximately 80% of drivers have admitted to using their phones while driving. This behavior can be correlated to an increase in crash risk and injury. More than 50 peer-reviewed studies have shown that using cell phones while driving is dangerous and contributes to thousands of crashes each year.

Utilizing a cell phone will alter a driver's skill visually, cognitively, and manually. One's visual attention is compromised by the act of dialing and/or texting. Cognitively, the driver is concentrating on the phone conversation rather than navigating the road ahead. Operating a hand-held device requires a driver to take his/her hand(s) off of the steering wheel, affecting the manual skills required of an individual for basic driving operations. (*National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*)

Internal & External Distractions Risk Control Recommendations

Distractions are inevitable and remain a constant challenge in operating an automobile. There are different types of distractions that can be classified as external or internal. Examples of external distractions are waving to someone on the street, or eye-catching billboards. Internal distractions include cell phone use, a conversation with a passenger, or the operation of the radio.

5.3% of internal distractions are related to the use of cell phones. This type of distraction can impede a driver's reaction time by an estimated 0.13 seconds. At 55 mph, this reaction time would add 16 feet to a vehicle's total stopping distance. This distance could prove vital if necessary to react to a hazardous situation.

Driving is a routine activity. The use of a cell phone while driving has become habitual for many drivers. In order to manage the risks of this behavior, there must be an incentive to change. The following are suggestions to manage driver distraction:

- Identify trends when conducting reviews of past accidents. Once trends are identified, implement trainings and/or modifications to equipment as needed. Consider reassignment of agency drivers if necessary.
- Establish a policy concerning the use of cell phones. Managers and administrators can monitor employee use of municipal cell phones by checking logs or cell phone bills
- Eliminate nonessential communication devices or systems in vehicles.
- Require drivers to become familiar with company vehicles. This process will reduce driver distraction resulting from inexperience with the vehicle.
- Carefully review new driving routes prior to a trip.
- Prohibit any note taking or writing of any kind while driving.
- Identify any local, state, or federal laws regarding cell phone use while driving.
- Establish formal procedures for violators and remedial training measures.

Did You Know?

- Cell phone use contributes to approximately 1.6 million crashes annually.
- Accidents in which cell phones are a contributing factor have resulted in approximately 430,000 injuries, 20,000 serious injuries, and 3,100 deaths per year.
- 80% of crashes are related to driver inattention or distraction.
- An estimated 100 million people use cell phones while driving.
- The annual cost of crashes caused by cell phone use is \$43,000,000,000.00.
- Distraction from cell phone use (hand-held or hands-free) extends a driver's reaction as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of 8%.
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37%.

This loss control brochure is offered in the hope that readers will benefit from it and take adequate steps to avoid conditions that might result in a loss. It does not intend to be a complete discussion of the subject, nor do we guarantee that compliance with its suggestions will assure the safety of persons and/or property.