

SAFETY NEWSLETTER

SELF INSURED WORKER'S COMPENSATION FUND MEMBERS

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The Two Sides of "Distracted Driving"

The Two Sides of "Distracted Driving" – Part One

As with anything in life there are always two sides of any situation. For this first part of this two-part series, we are going to focus on texting and driving as if you are the person behind the wheel. The second part of the series will focus on you, as the by-stander who might be the recipient of someone else texting and driving. Keep in mind that all of the information we are about to cover is not just for your safety, but is also a requirement of OSHA.

Texting while driving puts millions of Americans who drive on the job at risk every day. That risk continues to grow as texting becomes more widespread. As a business owner or manager, it's your legal responsibility under the Occupational Safety and Health Act to safeguard drivers at work.

This holds true whether they drive full-time or only occasionally to carry out their work, and whether they drive a company vehicle or their own. When your workers are behind the wheel doing your company's work, their safety is your business.

That's why the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which enforces worker safety laws, has joined with the Transportation Department, other Labor Department agencies and key associations and organizations to enlist the help and cooperation of businesses – in a nationwide outreach, education, and enforcement effort to stop the dangerous practice of texting while driving.

The Law

Your State legislature and governor make the laws regarding distracted driving. Many States now have laws against texting, talking on a cell phone, and other distractions while driving. You can visit the Governors Highway Safety Association to learn about the laws in your State. Visit <https://www.ghsa.org/index.php/state-laws/issues/distracted%20driving>



The Facts

- More workers are killed every year in Motor Vehicle Crashes than any other cause.
- Distracted driving claimed 3,166 lives in 2017 alone, (newest data available).
- Reaction time is delayed for a driver talking on a cell phone as much as it is for a driver who is legally drunk.
- More texting leads to more crashes. With each additional 1 million text messages, fatalities from distracted driving rose more than 75%.
- People under the age of 20 are involved in more fatal crashes due to distractions than any other age group.
- Studies show that drivers who send or receive text messages focus their attention away from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, this is equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded!

Employers & Supervisors Should

- Prohibit texting while driving. OSHA encourages employers to declare their vehicles "text-free zones" and to emphasize that commitment to their workers, customers, and communities.
- Establish work processes that do not make it necessary for workers to text while driving in order to carry out their duties.
- Set up clear procedures for the safe use of texting and other technologies for communicating with managers, customers, and others.
- Incorporate safe communications practices into worker orientation, training and meetings.
- Eliminate financial and other incentive systems that encourage workers to text while driving.



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New School Year

New drivers are hitting the roads this month, in every community across the United States. Thousands of them. Remember, people under the age of 20 are involved in more fatal crashes due to distractions than any other age group.

Studies have determined that teen drivers have a higher rate of fatal crashes, mainly because of their immaturity, lack of skills, and lack of experience. They speed, they make mistakes, and they get distracted easily – especially if their friends are in the car.

What Can You Do?

- Familiarize yourself with the restrictions placed on your teens license can better assist you in enforcing those laws. You have the opportunity to establish some important ground rules for your teen driver. Restrict night driving and passengers, prohibit driving while using the phone, and require seat belt use at all times.
- Set the example by keeping your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel while driving. Be consistent between the message you tell your teen and your own driving behaviors. Novice teen drivers most often learn from watching their parents.
- Don't rely solely on a driver's education class to teach your teen to drive. Set aside time to take your teen on practice driving sessions.
- Set consequences for distracted driving. If your teen breaks a distraction rule you've set, consider suspending your teen's driving privileges, or consider limiting a teen's access to their cell phone—a punishment that in today's world could be seen by teens as a serious consequence.

As we discussed earlier, as with anything in life there are always two sides of any situation. For the rest of this of the newsletter we are focusing on you, as the working by-stander who might be the recipient of someone else texting and driving. Keep in mind that all of the information we are about to cover is not just for your safety, but is also an expectation of OSHA.

Understand the hazards

Working close to traffic is dangerous, whether it involves construction related activities, maintaining property or vegetation. Each work site has its own unique set of hazards. Make sure all of the affected staff are informed of the known hazards at the work site before beginning work.

Be aware that the types of hazards can change over the course of your work shift. For example, traffic volumes can increase, a large number of 16 year old “first year drivers” leaving the local high school parking lot may not know how to properly operate the vehicle in an congested area where people are working near the road, or simply may not be paying attention.

From a defensive position, automatically assume that every person who is driving a vehicle near your work area is texting and driving. Taking this mental approach will assist you in establishing a work area that will help protect you from incidents involving a distracted driver.

As we learned from the first section of this article, people under the age of 20 are involved in more fatal crashes due to distractions than any other age group.

Potential hazards around the work site

- Consider if work vehicles will be entering or exiting the work site over the course of the day.
- Store your equipment and supplies in an area where they won't get hit and you can safely access them.
- Potential hazards on the road
- Be aware if you are working near an intersection with traffic coming from multiple directions.
- Measure how much space you have between your work site and the roadway. Be aware of your location vis-à-vis traffic, cyclists and pedestrians as you work.
- Be aware of the visibility of approaching drivers. Check to see if there are any curves, crests of hills, trees and bushes, or parked vehicles.

Potential traffic hazards

- Be aware of the type of traffic that is passing by – passenger vehicles, buses, large trucks.
- Large vehicles such as commercial trucks travel are often wider than normal vehicles and may have protruding side mirrors.
- Be aware of vehicles traveling faster than the speed limit.
- Look at the local area
- Identify any traffic entering or exiting nearby commercial premises that could block signage or obstruct visibility of you or your co-workers.
- Consider any police, ambulance or fire stations you should be aware of.

Look at the environment

- Consider if the weather may impact visibility of drivers (e.g., fog, heavy rain).
- Be aware of the condition of the roads. Are they slick or slippery?
- Be aware of any light conditions or location of the sun that may affect the drivers' visibility.

Consider how the above hazards may change over the course of your work. For example:

- Rush-hour traffic flows
- School run traffic and parking
- Special events
- Weather, amount of daylight, and road surface conditions

Review this checklist before beginning your roadside work.

- ✓ Are you aware of the hazards associated with your work site?
- ✓ Have you had a safety briefing to review work site hazards and address safety concerns?
- ✓ Do you understand your organization's procedures for working safely around work vehicles and mobile equipment?
- ✓ Are you wearing high-visibility garments? Is it clean and usable – not torn or faded?
- ✓ Do you know your escape route in case a vehicle crosses into the work zone?
- ✓ If you don't know where your work site will be in advance, do you know how to identify and address site-specific hazards once you arrive at your work site?

Remember

- Where possible, work facing traffic. This is especially important if the area is noisy or you're wearing hearing protection.
- Be careful not to inadvertently move closer to traffic as you work. Keep your focus; stay aware of your position.
- Be aware of changing conditions over the course of your work shift. Traffic volumes, road surface conditions and visibility can change quickly and increase your risk.
- Be aware of work vehicles, especially as they enter and exit the work zone. If you have any concerns about your safety – or the safety of co-workers, motorists, or pedestrians near your work site – alert your supervisor or employer.

*Source material and statistics are from OSHA, NHTSA, and ConeZoneBC.