

Cellular Phone Safety

In our fast-paced world, distractions are a fact of life. When performing critical tasks such as driving, these distractions must be either eliminated or properly controlled. One such distraction that can affect both the safety and liability of your business and its employees is using a cell phone for any application while operating a vehicle.

The exact impact on driving safety from cell phone use remains controversial. No matter where you stand on the issue, it's clear that using a cell phone while driving is distracting to the driver. Fortunately, this is one distraction that is totally within our control. It can, and should, be effectively managed.

Driving and Your Risk Exposure

As a business owner, one of your biggest risk exposures occurs when an employee drives on public streets and highways. This common hazard may be much more significant than you may realize.

Deaths from motor vehicle accidents remain a leading cause of work related fatalities in the United States. Driving also presents a significant corporate liability. In fact, vehicle operations are the highest liability exposure most businesses face. As a business owner, you're responsible for the actions of your employees while on the road. This is true anytime they're driving your vehicle or their own vehicle while on company

business. A vehicle accident can have disastrous and direct financial consequences on you, not to mention generating negative publicity for your business.

Controlling these exposures can be done but it takes proactive management to develop and communicate a policy on driver safety. Although there are many factors involved in driving safety, a key issue in many vehicle accidents is distraction.

Company Cell Phone Policy

As the person responsible for safety, it makes sense for you to develop, implement and monitor a formal, written cell phone/driving policy for your company. "Best Practice" would be to prohibit any cell phone use while driving. This would include making/receiving calls, text messaging, and Internet use. The Sample Safety Policy that follows takes that approach.

Note: Many states and local municipalities have or are considering legislation prohibiting cell phone usage while driving.

Note for drivers of commercial motor vehicles: Effective January 3, 2012, the FMCSA has prohibited the use of handheld cell phones. Substantial fines apply along with possible disqualification of your CDL.

Cell Phone Policy Template

The management group is responsible for the welfare and safety of all employees. To protect employees while driving on company business, we have implemented the following policy. This policy applies any time a company-owned or personal vehicle is driven for company business.

1. The use of a cell phone or other electronic device is allowed only when the vehicle is parked, except in an emergency situation. This would include making/receiving calls, text messaging, Internet use, and the use of other applications. Emergency situations include imminent danger, fire, traffic accident, road hazard or medical emergency.
2. Placing calls, texting or other electronic messaging activities are prohibited under our policy.
3. The use of a "hands-free" cell phone while driving is prohibited.
4. If the cell phone rings while driving, let the voice mail service take the call and listen to the message when the vehicle is parked.
5. Passengers in the vehicle may use a cell phone.

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