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Attending the NSC Congress & Expo? Check out our distracted driving session

Each fall, the National Safety Council hosts the nation's largest gathering of safety professionals - [Congress & Expo](#). This year's event will take place in San Diego, Sept. 13-19.

On Sept. 16, attend the [Best Practices for Employer Cell Phone Policies](#) session from 1:45-3:15 p.m. in room 25B.

This presentation will share the science behind driver distraction and crash risk, liability issues employers face and resources available to help put policies in place to reduce cell phone distracted driving.

NSC experts will also be available in the Council's Booth #4137 on the Expo floor on Sept. 15 from 10-1 and Sept. 16 from 10-12 if you'd like to talk with us about employer policies.

Join the discussion and get social

The Council has a variety of social media channels for you to join the discussion on distracted driving. This

Top three areas for improvement for employer cell phone policies

The National Safety Council has been collecting survey information from organizations over the years on cell phone policies - thank you to everyone who has participated. While it is great to see so many organizations getting involved in this issue, we are noticing a few trends we'd like to address.

Our mission is to save lives and prevent injuries. Best practice cell phone policies will help us do that. The video above outlines what a best practice cell phone policy should include.



The top three areas for improvement we are noticing include:

Policies should prohibit hands-free devices. While hundreds of companies have told us they have policies banning handheld and hands-free use among all employees, the majority of companies are still reporting policies that prohibit only handheld phones. More than 30 studies show hands-free devices are not any safer than handheld. Employers that allow hands-free use are exposing employees to crash risk and their organization to liability risk. Check out our white papers on the [distracted brain](#) and [employer liability](#).

Policies should prohibit handheld and hands-free devices for all vehicles and all employees. For many companies, their policies apply only to fleet vehicles - the professional drivers or cars provided to employees. These policies don't cover employee-owned vehicles. Unfortunately, this leaves many employees exposed to a safety risk. We encourage these employers to expand their existing policies to also apply to employee-owned vehicles when they're being driven for work purposes. Work-related purposes include driving to a meeting, running errands,

includes:

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- A variety of [LinkedIn](#) groups, including one on [Employer Policies](#)

Sharing the Council's infographics is a great way to get started. Check out our latest infographic [Hands-free is not risk-free](#) to help raise awareness, prevent injuries and save lives.



Resources

Want to learn more about the issue?

Visit distracteddriving.nsc.org for more information and materials.



Cell phone distracted driving is an issue that touches all of us. [Your contribution](#) will help NSC continue to save lives by reducing crashes on our roadways.

etc. If any employee uses a cell phone during a job-related trip and crashes, your organization could be held liable, even if you don't own or lease the vehicle. Along the same lines, best practice policies should also apply to company-owned or reimbursed phones and to employee phones when used for a business related call.

Policies should go further than federal regulations and state laws. Some people tell us that their policies are written to comply with USDOT regulations or state law. The problem with this is, currently USDOT regulations allow hands-free device use and all state laws allow hands-free device use for adult drivers (many states actually ban handheld and hands-free phone use for teen drivers). Research has not shown a safety benefit to hands-free conversation - and has found that hands-free texting features can be even more distracting to drivers than typing texts. NSC has a database of fatal and serious injury crashes where drivers were using hands-free devices. Employers have been found liable when employees crashed while using hands-free devices. An employer's best protection is to acknowledge and educate employees about the risk, and pass a policy with the expectation that employees not use handheld or hands-free devices when driving.

Public ready for stiffer penalties for texting while driving

New findings from a National Safety Council public opinion poll indicate 73% of respondents think there should be more enforcement of texting laws, while only 22% said the current level of enforcement is fine.

When asked what type of penalties they'd like to see, 52% of poll participants chose penalties including a point system that could lead to the loss of a driver's license or increased insurance costs, 51% were in favor of different levels of penalties for first vs. repeat offenses and half thought large monetary fines should be used.

For years, there has been widespread opposition to texting behind the wheel. Polls like these show the public is behind stronger penalties as most people recognize that it will take more than awareness campaigns to stop this dangerous behavior.

About 5% of crashes are estimated to involve texting while driving. However, talking on a cell phone, either hands-free or handheld, is estimated be involved in 21% of crashes. Continue spreading the message that hands-free is not risk-free, so the public can understand the true dangers of the cell phone conversation as well.

New dashboard infotainment systems are a great concern

Dashboard infotainment systems in vehicles are a real threat to roadway safety. The release of new technology such as Apple's CarPlay and Google's Android Auto are likely only the beginning.

The Council's David Teater remarked in an [article](#), "The auto industry and the consumer electronics industry are really in an arms race to see how we can enable drivers to do stuff other than

driving as long as their hands are on the wheel and their eyes are on the road. They completely disregard the critical requirement that the driver's attention is focused on driving and not on other, non-driving activities."

Vehicle technology unrelated to the task of driving, such as dashboard infotainment systems that allow hands-free phoning, speech to text, internet connectivity and the ability to interact on social networks, is not safe to use behind the wheel.

With driver error being a leading cause of crashes, why would we rush to enable drivers to engage in non-driving activities? All technology development should focus exclusively on advancing systems that prevent crashes, not those that may increase them.

If your organization has a Cell Phone Policy, consider adding language around the use of dashboard infotainment systems while driving.

Save the date: Employer cell phone distracted driving policy seminar comes to the Midwest

When: Thursday, Oct. 23, 2014

Where: Westin hotel near O'Hare Airport in Rosemont, IL

Cost: \$50 registration fee

This [one-day seminar](#) will cover:

- The impact and scope of cell phone distracted driving crashes
- The science behind why our brains can't drive well and talk on cell phone at the same time
- Employer liability - why employers can be held liable and how a strong, enforced policy can lessen risk
- What a good cell phone policy should include
- How a Fortune 500 firm convinced management, developed and implemented policy, educated employees and are measuring results
- Resources available to help you keep your employee safe

[Register Today](#)



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