



Employer policies, employee perspectives on distracted driving at Fortune 500 companies

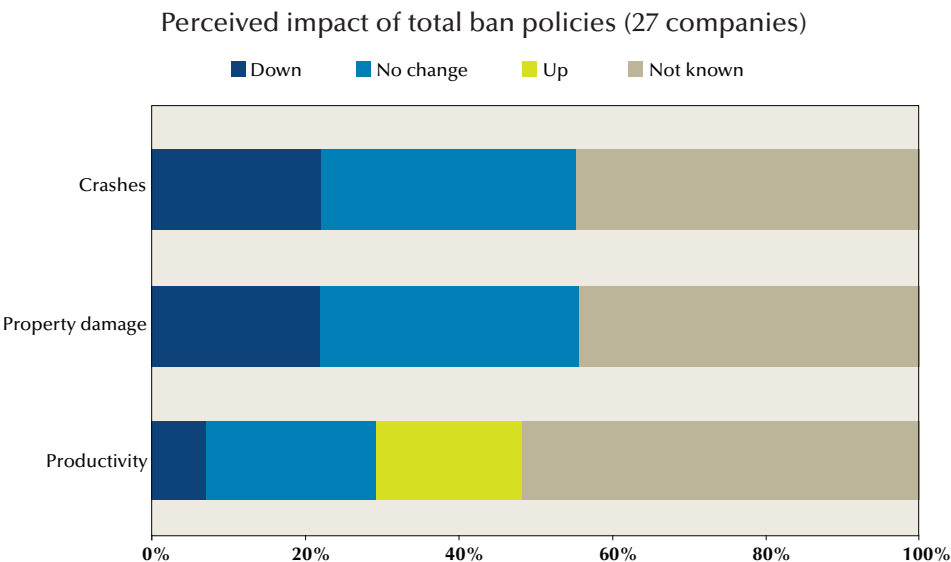
In September 2010, the National Safety Council contracted an independent firm, OpinionAmerica Group, to conduct a telephone survey of Fortune 500 companies to explore their policies and practices on cell phone use while driving. These preliminary results are based on 148 completed surveys (29.6 percent response rate). The participating companies represented the manufacturing (24 percent), finance and insurance (9 percent), retail trade (8 percent) and other industries. Thirty percent of respondents were in a human resources role.

Among respondents, 27 companies (18 percent) had total bans on cell phone use while driving. Nearly all companies with total cell phone bans apply the policy to all worksites in the United States, regardless of varying state laws.

Since creating the policies, 41 percent have observed either an increase or no change in productivity. Because most of these policies were enacted between 2005 and 2010, an additional 52 percent of respondents indicated they either did not know or it was too early for them to talk about the productivity impact. One out of every 5 companies with full bans observed decreased crash rates and property damage.

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Additionally, focus group discussions took place within a Fortune 500 company whose policies prohibit employees from using cell phones while driving. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn more about employees' perspectives and experiences in addressing this safety concern. Thirty-four mid-level managers and front-line employees participated in four focus groups – two



of which took place on the East Coast and two in the South.

Participants all agreed that the growing reliance on wireless technology in business communications was closely linked to their company's level of concern with driver distractions. The corporate policy, in effect since the early 2000s, prohibits cell phone use while driving on company business. It covers all employees, contractors, consultants, and part-time and temporary workers.

Individual units within the company were said to be responsible for ensuring policy compliance and determining the level of enforcement, training and education needed to reinforce key messages.

Factors found to enable adoption of safe behavior:

- Strong corporate safety culture
- Safety policies that collectively aim to protect the employee
- Supportive managers who personally demonstrate safe behaviors

- Effective internal communications
- Knowledge of the consequences of risk taking

Many of the participants believed the policy was a natural outgrowth of a companywide deliberation process that took into account all available research connecting cell phone use to increased crash risk.

A key issue was whether the policy resulted in any change to business practices. Providing cell phones to employees was seen as having significant benefits in terms of increased productivity. At the same time, participants agreed the overall impact of the policy on productivity had been negligible.

Several participants claimed the policy, accompanied by safety education, was crucial in helping them share key messages with friends and family. Personal stories told made it clear that employees were well-prepared to motivate behavioral change among others.