



# 5 minute safety talk

## Driver Safety

### Fleet safety

More than 35,000 people die in crashes every year on U.S. roads. That comes to about 96 deaths every day – or four deaths every hour. Many of those deaths are the result of incidents that take place during the workday or during the commute to-and-from work. More than 90% of crashes are the result of driver error and, therefore, are preventable.

Employers absorb the brunt of costs for injuries that occur both on and off the job through items such as lost work days and insurance premiums. Whether you manage a fleet of vehicles, oversee a mobile sales force or simply employ commuters, by implementing a driver safety program in the workplace, you can greatly reduce risks faced by your employees and their families while protecting your company's bottom line.

### Distracted driving

Thousands die every year in incidents involving smartphones and distractions from dashboard infotainment systems. Many employers have enacted cell phone driving policies. Typically, these policies ask employees to:

- Program/start GPS equipment prior to starting the vehicle or pull over and park if changes need to be made
- Turn off smartphones or other devices before starting the vehicle
- Inform clients, associates and business partners that calls will be returned when they are not driving
- Pull over to a safe location and put their vehicle in park if a call must be made

Many drivers continue to use phones even when they are aware of the crash risk associated with distraction. Cell phone blocking apps and devices can help drivers stay focused on driving. They prevent drivers from making or accepting calls, texting or accessing the internet.

### Drunk and drugged driving

One-third of traffic fatalities involve alcohol. Impairment begins with the first drink. Mental faculties such as judgment are the first to be diminished. This can make it difficult for a driver to reason and respond in an emergency situation. Taking over-the-counter or prescription medications can put drivers at risk, too. Safe driving requires comprehension, concentration, coordination and quick reflexes. Drugs (including marijuana) affect all of these skills.

# Aggressive driving

Speeding is one of the three biggest contributing factors in fatalities on our nation's roads. Aggressive driving behaviors also can include frequent and unnecessary lane changes, tailgating and running red or yellow lights. All of these behaviors can lead to road rage, which is a physical assault of a person or vehicle as a result of a traffic incident.

Here, the best offense is a solid defense, as in teaching and promoting defensive driving skills. Talk to employees about risks. Encourage them to adopt safe driving habits.

# Drowsy driving

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports more than one-third of U.S. adults sleep less than seven hours a day. Drowsy driving occurs when people take the wheel despite experiencing feelings of sleepiness and fatigue. The consequences can be deadly. More than 5,000 people died in drowsy driving-related crashes in 2015.

Some vehicles today are equipped with technology that can detect when a driver is about to nod off and deliver a warning signal. Make sure your drivers know how to use all the safety features in their vehicles. Introduce them to learning opportunities provided by sites such as [MyCarDoesWhat.org](http://MyCarDoesWhat.org) to fill in knowledge gaps.

Remember, you are still your vehicle's best safety feature. If you are tired, pull over. Three more ideas to share at your workplace:

- Take a nap (20 minutes of sleep can alleviate feelings of drowsiness, at least temporarily)
- Drink a caffeinated beverage (coffee or cola)
- Schedule travel breaks

# Passenger restraint

Seat belts are inexpensive and effective. They save lives and reduce injuries. Employees who are in the habit of using a safety belt during work hours also are more likely to buckle up when they are off the clock. More than half of teens and adults who die in crashes are reported as unrestrained at the time of the crash, according to the CDC.

The Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Occupational Safety & Health Administration produced a report indicating the average crash costs an employer more than \$16,000. Furthermore, when a worker has an on-the-job crash that results in an injury, the cost to their employer jumps to more than \$70,000. Costs can exceed \$500,000 when a fatality is involved, according to the report.

Bottom line: No organization can afford to ignore traffic safety because of the impact on personnel and budget.