



NSC MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Employer Cell Phone Policies: No Decrease in Productivity

October 23, 2009 – A survey of National Safety Council members has revealed that 99 percent of companies with policies prohibiting the use of cell phones and messaging devices while driving have experienced no decrease in productivity – and some have seen an increase in productivity – after the policies took effect. Productivity concerns were the top reason given by respondents who have not established a cell phone policy.

Of over 2,000 respondents, 58 percent said their organization had a cell phone policy of some kind. Of those, 469 member companies have enacted cell phone bans that prohibit employees from using hands-free or handheld phones.

“Companies today face serious economic challenges, and we are very pleased to see that this critical safety issue is being taken seriously by business leaders across the country,” said Janet Froetscher, president and CEO of NSC. “Policies banning cell phone use while driving make sense as companies strive to improve employee safety and stay profitable.”

The majority of survey respondents represented manufacturing, transportation and warehousing companies with fewer than 500 employees. Most companies implemented their policies since 2006, reflecting the dramatic increase in use of wireless technology. Employee safety and public safety were the top two reasons given by 99 percent of companies.

The survey found that although most policies are enforced through an honor system, 43 percent of companies conduct parking lot observations and 40 percent use driver records and traffic citations. Almost 10 percent conduct in-vehicle monitoring, which is a growing area for policy compliance. The four most common disciplinary actions include formal write-ups, verbal warnings, temporary job suspension and termination.

Other findings

Many company policies cover only company-owned phones and/or company-owned vehicles. This leaves employees who are using their own phones and/or vehicles uncovered. However, these employees face the same crash risks.

Many NSC members expect to implement new policies or upgrade existing policies:

- Half of companies currently prohibiting only handheld phones while driving report they are "somewhat" to "very likely" to upgrade their policies to include banning hands-free phones.
- Over a third of companies without any policy expect to implement one within the next 12 months.

Employee acceptance is another common barrier. But public opinion polls show most people support bans on hands-free and handheld phones while driving. A 2008 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety survey found 83 percent of drivers rated distracted drivers and drivers using cell phones as a serious to extremely serious safety problem. Nearly half of drivers said using a cell phone while driving was never acceptable. Employees may be more accepting of a policy than expected.