

Drive Employees...

**TO A COMPANY-WIDE TRAFFIC SAFETY POLICY:
NO MORE DISTRACTED DRIVING**



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DISTRACTED DRIVING (AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM)

Cell phones have become a fact of modern life, as 80 percent of Americans own one. We have learned a lot in recent years about the risks associated with cell phone use and driving, and those risks and costs will likely continue to grow over the coming years.

Requiring employees to refrain from initiating or receiving phone calls, text messages or emails as a condition of employment will likely prompt questions from employees. Below are some potential comments and questions you might get asked, along with responses.

1. YOU WANT US TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE, BUT NOW YOU'RE TYING OUR HANDS WHILE WE'RE DRIVING.

There's no question that productivity is a priority for the health of any organization. However, we certainly don't want increased productivity at the expense of our employees' safety and well-being. No cell phone call, text message or email is worth a life, or even a fender bender.

Employers that have already passed cell phone policies have found that employees find ways to maintain productivity and accessibility after they stop using the phone while driving, including better time management and changing old habits for new ones. Even sales forces heavily dependent on communication have found different ways to maintain their productivity. Rarely does productivity actually decrease.

(Additionally, if you are a school bus driver with passengers age 17 and younger, Texas law forbids you from talking on a cell phone or texting while driving.)

2. I DON'T SEE WHAT'S WRONG WITH USING HANDS-FREE TECHNOLOGY. IT LETS YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS ON THE WHEEL.

Crash risk is the same with hands-free and hand-held phones—it is the conversation itself that causes distraction. Our mind is engaged in the conversation and we are not as focused on our surroundings, decreasing awareness necessary for good driving. Drivers tend to “look but not see” when talking on the phone; they miss important navigation signs and traffic signals even when traveling in familiar areas. Their reaction time to vehicles braking in front of them is much slower. These problems cause driving errors that increase crash risk by four times. The issue isn't where your hands are, it's where your mind is.

3. WHY IS TALKING ON A CELL PHONE MORE DANGEROUS THAN TALKING TO A PASSENGER?

During a face-to-face conversation, you rely on many non-verbal cues to understand the other person. While talking on a cell phone, you cannot read these cues so you focus more attention on the conversation than usual. This distracts your mind from focusing on driving.



**Create a COMPANY
OF safe drivers!**
txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany

The National Safety Council saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy. For more information about safe driving in Texas, please visit the Texas Chapter of the National Safety Council at txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany, call 888-222-4143 or email texas@nsc.org.

Drive Employees...

TO A COMPANY-WIDE TRAFFIC SAFETY POLICY: NO MORE DISTRACTED DRIVING



Also, passengers can see your driving environment. They are aware of the situation around you and will tend to adjust the conversation to fit the risk level of driving. A passenger can even serve as an additional look-out for hazards, like a co-pilot. As a result, passengers actually reduce crash risk for adult drivers. Please note that this is not true for novice teen drivers—both passengers and cell phones dramatically increase crash risk for teen drivers.

4. WHAT IF I WANT TO MAKE A PERSONAL CALL USING MY OWN CELL PHONE?

Increased crash risk makes no distinction between personal and business use. Thus, our policy makes no distinction between use of a personal cell phone or a business cell phone, or a personal or business conversation, text or email. It addresses the use of any cell phone or PDA while operating a vehicle.

5. AREN'T CELL PHONES IMPORTANT DEVICES FOR REPORTING EMERGENCIES?

It is true that cell phones are important for immediately reporting emergencies. However, emergency calls should be made from parked vehicles.

6. THERE ARE A LOT OF DISTRACTIONS WHILE DRIVING, SUCH AS EATING, DRINKING, SMOKING AND EVEN PETS. WHY ARE YOU FOCUSING ON THE USE OF CELL PHONES AND PDAS?

Any distraction is dangerous, and we encourage our employees to avoid other hazardous driving distractions, such as eating, smoking, reading a map and unrestrained pets. These distractions, however, do not approach the risk levels associated with cell phones. This is because cell phone use occurs more frequently and for much longer durations than other distracting behaviors. In addition, cell phones are a unique distraction because they involve all three types of driver distraction: they can take your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel and your mind off driving, all at the same time.

7. ISN'T BANNING THE USE OF CELL PHONES WHILE DRIVING AN INFRINGEMENT OF MY PERSONAL FREEDOM?

State government does not guarantee its citizens' driving privileges, let alone the right to engage in risky behavior that endangers others on the roadways. Cell phone users face no compelling loss of freedom; they must simply change a habit. The small inconvenience of not using a cell phone is far outweighed by the overall benefit to the safety of you and others, including your family and friends.

8. AREN'T YOU JUST CONCERNED THAT SOMEBODY IS GOING TO SUE THE ORGANIZATION?

Organizations are being held financially responsible for cell phone-related crashes, but it's not the first thing we're concerned about. The fact is, driving while using a cell phone or PDA is dangerous. We have policies



**Create a COMPANY
of safe drivers!**
txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany

The National Safety Council saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy. For more information about safe driving in Texas, please visit the Texas Chapter of the National Safety Council at txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany, call 888-222-4143 or email texas@nsc.org.

Drive Employees...

**TO A COMPANY-WIDE TRAFFIC SAFETY POLICY:
NO MORE DISTRACTED DRIVING**



and practices to help keep you safe from other work-related hazards where we know there is increased risk of injury. It is our responsibility to provide a safe environment for you to work in so you can return safely home each day. This is the primary reason we are introducing a policy to help reduce your risk of injury from using cell phones while driving.

9. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY COLLEAGUES ARE CONCERNED WHEN I DON'T ANSWER MY PHONE?

Let colleagues know in advance that you do not answer your phone while driving, for safety reasons. You should state this on your voice mail greeting. You can even leave an estimate of your arrival time on your voice mail greeting so callers will know when to expect you. As another idea, when traveling in poor weather, heavy traffic, or for long periods of time, set up a plan to regularly pull off the road and park somewhere safe in order to check in with callers.

10. HOW DO I MANAGE DEMANDING COLLEAGUES OR CLIENTS WHO CANNOT REACH ME WHILE I AM DRIVING?

Create a voice mail greeting explaining that you may have missed a call because you are currently driving a vehicle. When you need to travel for a long period of time, ask a colleague if you can leave their name and number on your voice mail as an alternate contact to help callers while you are driving.

11. WHAT DO I DO IF I AM EXPECTING AN IMPORTANT PHONE CALL WHILE I AM DRIVING?

The safest action is to pull off the road and park your vehicle in a safe place, such as a parking lot, before you answer the call. If possible, let important callers know in advance that you will not answer your phone while driving. Assure them you will call them back as soon as you can safely stop your vehicle.

12. WHAT DO I DO IF I AM GOING TO BE LATE FOR A MEETING DUE TO WEATHER OR BAD TRAFFIC?

If you are going to be late for a meeting, pull off the road, stop your vehicle, and place a call.



**Create a COMPANY
OF safe drivers!**
txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany

The National Safety Council saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy. For more information about safe driving in Texas, please visit the Texas Chapter of the National Safety Council at txdrivingconcern.org/safecompany, call 888-222-4143 or email texas@nsc.org.