

Mobile Device Distractions in the Workplace

FACTSHEET

Mobile electronic devices are powerful tools that give us instant access to information and communications. These devices can make our lives easier and more enjoyable with appropriate use. However, they can cause trouble at work and cause serious injury or tragic consequences when used at the wrong time or in the wrong manner. Like other workplace distractions, using mobile devices at work causes us to lose focus on the job at hand. To keep workers safe, employers should establish a policy for using mobile devices in the workplace.

Mobile Devices and Equipment Operators:

- Use of mobile devices while operating equipment is prohibited. It only takes a few seconds of taking your eye or your mind off the primary task for serious injury or death to occur.

Mobile Devices Around Hazardous Substances

- Employees who work in areas containing hazardous substances already understand not to eat, drink or apply makeup in these areas due to the risk of contamination. They must now add using their phone and other mobile devices to the list of banned practices in hazardous areas, including near flammables and explosive atmospheres.

Mobile Devices in the Office and on the Jobsite

The use of mobile devices at work is known to reduce productivity and can impact safety. While many companies forbid texting and cellphone use altogether, others allow it under certain circumstances. In fact, some employers actually prefer to communicate with certain workers through text messaging or email sent to a cellphone or other device.

Depending on your company policy for use of mobile devices, these guidelines can help to maintain a safe and productive worksite:

- It takes “two to text.” If you are the person on the receiving end of prohibited or unsafe texts being sent at work, don’t respond. Let them know, in person, that texting at work is unsafe and inappropriate and that you will not participate.
- Similar to other safety issues, putting a stop to dangerous texting or other distracting mobile device use requires employers and employees to establish a culture of speaking up and refusing to participate. When employees help to create this type of work environment, it creates a safer workplace for everyone.

Mobile Devices and Driving (cont'd)

Today, drivers increasingly use their cellphones and other mobile devices in their vehicles. We recommend that you avoid using your phone for sending texts, updating social media, or even checking the weather while driving. If you must use your cellphone while driving, here is some guidance to help keep you safe:

- Get to know your cellphone and its features, like speed dial and redial.
- When available, use a hands-free device.
- Position your cellphone within easy reach. Suspend conversations during hazardous driving conditions or situations.
- Do not take notes or look up phone numbers while driving.
- If you must make a call, first pull over to a place that is safe from hazards, stop the vehicle and then make your call.
- Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations that may be distracting.
- Use your cellphone to call for help.
- Use your cellphone to help others in emergencies.
- Call roadside assistance or a special non-emergency assistance number when necessary.

Mobile Devices and Walking

Studies show that walking and using electronic devices can cause injury or death. Pedestrians using their cellphones often did not notice objects or people in their path. The studies also found a type of preoccupation called “inattention blindness,” meaning that a person can be looking at an object but not register what it is. **Keep track of your surroundings.**

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act, [employers are responsible](#) for providing a safe and healthy workplace and [workers have rights](#). OSHA can help answer questions or concerns from employers and workers. OSHA's [On-site Consultation Program](#) offers free and confidential advice to small and medium-sized businesses, with priority given to high-hazard worksites. For more information, contact your [regional or area OSHA office](#), call 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), or visit www.osha.gov.

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