



# Cell Phone Policy Kit

## FAQs, Myths & Misunderstandings

### Recommended Usage

These answers can be used to help management prepare for the types of questions and comments employees may raise about a cell phone use while driving policy. This information also can be distributed to employees.

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### **You want us to be more productive, but now you're holding us back from being so while driving.**

There's no question 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 is worth a life, or even a fender bender.

Employers that have already passed cell phone policies have found their employees find ways to maintain productivity and accessibility once ceasing cell phone use while driving. Even sales forces, heavily dependent on communication, have used time management and new habits to maintain their productivity.

(It may also be the law in your state. Check these Websites for the most current laws:

Governors Highway Safety Association:

[http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone\\_laws.html](http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html)

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety:

<http://www.iihs.org/laws/cellphonelaws.aspx>

### **I don't see what's wrong with using hands-free technology. It lets you keep your hands on the wheel.**

The crash risk is similar with hands-free and handheld phones because the distraction stems from the conversation, which is a cognitive distraction of the mind. We become focused on the phone call and lose the situational awareness necessary for safe driving. Drivers tend to "look" but not "see" when talking on both hands-free and handheld phones. Drivers see and remember only half of the driving environment around them. They tend to miss seeing important navigation signs and traffic signals, even when traveling in familiar areas. Their reaction time is much slower. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, these problems cause driving errors that increase your crash risk by four times. So the issue isn't where your hands are – it's where your mind is.



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## **Why is talking on a cell phone more dangerous than talking to a passenger?**

During a conversation with a passenger, 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.

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 lookout 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.

## **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 e-mail. It addresses the use of any cell phone while operating a vehicle.

## **Aren't cell phones important devices for reporting emergencies?**

Cell phones are important for immediately reporting emergencies. However, emergency calls should be made from parked vehicles.

## **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?**

Any distraction is dangerous, and we encourage our employees to avoid other hazardous driving distractions including 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, hands off the wheel and mind off driving, all at the same time.

## **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 behaviors that endanger others on the roadways.

Cell phone users face no compelling loss of freedom; rather, they must 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.



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## **Aren't you just concerned somebody is going to sue the organization?**

Some organizations have been held financially responsible for cell phone-related crashes, but it's not the only thing we're concerned about. The fact is, driving while using a cell phone is dangerous. Our responsibility to you is to provide a safe environment for you to work in, so you can return safely home to your family and friends each day. We have policies and practices to help keep you safe from other work-related hazards where an increased risk of injury is known. Why wouldn't we also have a policy to help reduce your risk of injury due to cell phone use while driving?

## **What should I do if my colleagues or clients are concerned when I don't answer my phone?**

Let them know in advance that, for safety reasons, you do not answer your phone while driving. You can also mention this on your voice mail greeting. If appropriate, leave an estimated arrival time on your voice mail greeting so callers will know when to expect you. 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, to check in with callers.

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.

## **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.

## **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, park your vehicle and place a call.