



## Weekly Safety Topic

Week 8 – February 24 - 28, 2020

### *Cell Phone Safety*

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#### **Introduction**

Cell phones are critical tools that allow employees to communicate and share digital information. However, cell phones are also a source of distraction that can create potential hazards within the workplace.

This week we will discuss how inappropriate cell phone usage can create or increase hazards and ways to responsibly manage cell phone usage to improve workplace safety.

#### **Monday –Distracted Driving in the Workplace**

It is important for businesses that require the use of vehicles to address cell phone usage in their policies and training materials, especially prohibiting phone usage while driving.

OSHA’s “Distracted Driving Initiative” targets texting as a major cause of workplace injuries. David Michaels, OSHA’s 12<sup>th</sup> Assistant Secretary, stated that “It is well recognized that texting while driving dramatically increases the risk of motor vehicle injury or fatality. We are asking employers to send a clear message to workers and supervisors that your company neither requires nor condones texting while driving.”

Eliminating the use of cell phones while operating motor vehicles promotes safe working practices and helps reduce the numbers of distracted driving injuries.

#### **Tuesday –Operating Industrial Machinery**

Inappropriate use of cell phones presents safety hazards beyond distracted driving.

OSHA regulation (29 C.F.R. 1926.1217(d)) prohibits the use of cell phones in construction regulations pertaining to cranes and derricks. Additionally, many hazards are already present when operating certain types of equipment and heavy machinery, especially powered industrial trucks, overhead cranes, and any other industrial machinery without adding the element of distraction from cell phone usage.

#### **Wednesday – Other Distractions in the Workplace**

Preventing accidents starts with having situational awareness and losing that awareness increases the risk of hazards resulting in injuries.

Dividing focus between using a cell phone and operating equipment creates an opportunity for an accident to occur. Giving undivided attention to a task, even if it’s as simple as walking from one point to another, helps ensure that the task is done correctly and any hazards that are present do not result in injuries.

#### **Thursday –Non-Work Related Risks**

So far this week, we’ve discussed work related hazards that are created by inappropriate cell phone usage. However as we all know, hazards don’t just exist in the workplace. Many states and cities have specific laws governing cell phone usage that not only apply to driving, but in some cases, also crossing the street and doing various other activities.

It’s important to know the local laws regarding cell phone usage. A good rule of thumb is to make sure you are in a safe location and not attempting to perform a potentially dangerous activity while using a cell phone.



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#### **Friday – Open Discussion**

This week we've identified hazards that are associated with inappropriate cell phone usage. Now let's discuss some personal experiences you may have witnessed regarding using cell phones in the wrong place at the wrong time.

- Have you ever witnessed anyone that was injured because they were trying to perform a task while using a cell phone? Have you ever gotten injured by doing this?
- Are there designated safe zones to use a cell phone in your workplace?
- What are some off limit areas for cell phone usage?
- Does your workplace encourage or discourage cell phone usage in the workplace?
- Are you ever required to text and drive due to work? If so, has the issue of distracted driving been addressed?
- What are some constructive policies your workplace can put in place to prevent cell phone usage from becoming a hazard?