

# Distracted Driving



## A completely preventable accident waiting to happen.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed almost 3,000 lives across the country in 2018. Drivers, passengers, pedestrians, workers, and bicyclists have been killed or severely injured because of distracted driving.

Distracted driving involves some type of distraction while driving. Talking on a cell phone while driving is the most common, followed by texting and internet use. Listening to a podcast, using the vehicle GPS, changing the radio, or eating while driving can also lead to a distracted driving accident.

Taking your eyes off the road to read or compose a text while driving for only 5 seconds at 55 miles an hour is like closing your eyes for the entire length of a football field while driving.

What actions has your company taken to prevent a distracted driving accident?

While many states have enacted laws to address distracted driving in vehicles, the laws aren't the same in every state. Some states ban holding a cell phone while driving, while others ban using a cell phone altogether while driving, including texting and internet usage.

Specific state rules for cell phone use can be found at the Governors Highway Safety Association, [www.gsha.org](http://www.gsha.org).

Federal requirements banning cell phone usage for drivers have not been updated since 2008. Many of the phones from that era were flip phones! Smart phones were "first generation" models with no voice recognition. While today's models are "smarter," they still need user interaction.

## Controlling a preventable distracted driving accident starts with a written cell phone policy that addresses:

- The accepted or prohibited use of a cell phone while driving a company vehicle.
  - Prohibiting texting while driving.
  - Use of blue tooth devices.
  - Use of phone mapping apps while driving the vehicle.
  - Use of ear buds while driving or using a piece of equipment. Earbuds do not allow a user to hear outside noises.
- Procedures for reviewing the policy with employees on a regular basis (at hire, annually, or when changes are made to the policy) with an acknowledgment signature in the file.
- A reference to or inclusion of your existing discipline system to address violations of the policy.

## Personal tips to stop yourself from driving distracted:

- Limit phone use while you're driving or turn it off if necessary. Hands-free calling or voice texting while driving can still result in a distracted driving accident.
- If available as an option on your phone, set your phone to provide an automatic response while you're driving, notifying the sender that you're driving and can't talk now.
- Use a phone app that silences calls and texts while in motion. This type of app sends an auto-response notifying the sender you're driving and can't talk now.

## Multiple phone apps are available; some are free. AT&T's DriveMode, (for AT&T customers only), Lifesaver App, and OneTap App are examples.

- Pull off the road and park in a safe spot, such as a parking lot, before making a call or sending a text. Stay there until your discussion is finished. Then get back on the road.
- Avoid eating, glancing at your calendar, and searching for items while driving.

