

# Companies Regulate Cell Phone Use Behind the Wheel But Not Elsewhere



Most people know that using cell phones while driving is dangerous as it distracts drivers from focusing on the road and its hazards. (And according to this infographic, even the use of hands free devices doesn't reduce the distraction.)

So when we recently asked how you regulate cell phone use by workers, it was no surprise that most of you ban or restrict the use of cell phones by workers while driving or operating equipment.

But cell phones (and other electronic devices, such as tablets and MP3 players) can also be distracting when workers are doing other tasks or simply walking around the workplace'sometimes with tragic results:

- At an active BC construction site, a section manager made a call on his cell phone to an engineer about some gauges. He stopped with his back to a truck, unaware that it was backing up immediately behind him. The truck's rear tires snagged the back of his leg and pulled him under the truck. He died from his injuries.
- A construction worker in New Brunswick was so distracted on his cell phone that he stepped right in front of a truck and was seriously injured.

The OHS laws are starting to catch on to these distractions. For example, Manitoba recently enacted new regulations that specifically bar workers from using electronic devices such as cell phones while acting as 'flag persons.'

However, it appears that many workplaces don't address the out-of-the-vehicle distractions of cell phone use. For example, in our recent poll, you told us you:

- Ban use of cell phones while driving/operating equipment only. (28%)
- Restrict use of cell phones both in the workplace and while

driving/operating equipment. (28%)

- Limit use of cell phones in the workplace, such as to break rooms. (25%)
- Don't regulate cell phone use at all. (11%)
- Ban use of cell phones in the workplace completely. (8%)

Read BC lawyer Robert Smithson's take on the distractions of cell phone use on the job.

To ensure that workers aren't distracted by their cell phones both while behind the wheel and on the job in general, you should have a comprehensive cell phone use policy that covers:

- Prohibited uses, both in general and when driving or operating equipment
- Permitted uses
- Consequences of violations of the policy.

Go the OHS Insider's Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices Compliance Centre for additional resources, including:

- a slideshow on 11 lawsuits involving worker distracted driving
- the dangers of texting while driving
- a briefing for senior management on company liability for distracted driving accidents
- a Model Cell Phone Use Policy
- a Model Distracted Driving Policy
- a Music Device Policy
- a Distracted Driving Infographic.

At SafetyPoster.com, you can buy a poster on cell phone distractions on the job.

And at Safety Smart, you'll find a safety talk on distracted driving. Not a Safety Smart member? Sign up for a free day trial.