

Spot The Safety Violation: Distracted Walking Safety Tips



You know distracted driving is dangerous. But what about distracted walking'



Using cell phones and other electronic devices is dangerous not only while driving but also while simply walking. Pedestrians have been known to walk into people or objects, step in front of traffic, fall off curbs, etc. when distracted by texting, talking or otherwise using their phones.

For example, the woman in this picture from the Canadian Press is casually crossing the street while focused on the cellphone in her hand'and not on the streetcar that could easily hit her.

If walking while using a cellphone is hazardous in public, imagine how dangerous it can be in a workplace such as a warehouse or construction site:

- 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.
- At a construction site in BC, a section manager made a call on his cell phone. He stopped with his back to a truck, unaware that it was backing up. The truck's rear tires snagged the back of his leg and pulled him under the truck. He died from his injuries.

DISTRACTED WALKING SAFETY TIPS

Two studies found that cognitive distraction from the use of cell phones reduces situational awareness and increases unsafe behaviour, putting pedestrians at greater risk for accidents. And a health column in the *New York Times* discusses another study that found that distracted walkers veer off course by as much as **61%** while texting and walking.

The number of injuries caused by distracted walking has increased so much that the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons released a public service announcement on so-called 'Digital Deadwalkers.'

To be safe when walking, the Academy has these six safety tips you should give workers:

1. If you must use headphones or other electronic devices, maintain a volume where you can still hear the sounds of traffic and your surroundings.
2. If you need to talk to someone next to you, make a phone call, text or do anything that could distract you from getting where you need to go safely, stop and do so away from the pedestrian traffic flow.
3. While you walk, focus on the people, objects and obstacles around you.
4. Don't jaywalk. Cross streets carefully, preferably at a traffic light, remaining cognizant of the pedestrian traffic flow, and the vehicles and bikes in and near the road.
5. Look up, not down, especially when stepping off or onto curbs or in the middle of major intersections; and/or when walking on or approaching stairs or escalators.
6. Stay alert in parking lots, and on and near streets, especially during the winter when it gets dark earlier and drivers aren't as likely to see you.

The above tips also apply in the workplace. In other words, you should bar workers from using cell phones not only when they're operating vehicles or powered mobile equipment but also when they're walking on the job site, plant floor, warehouse, etc. And remind them to stay alert and aware of their surroundings at all times.