

# Focus.

## Safe driving is serious business.



Distracted driving is not a new issue. However, the increasing prevalence of in-vehicle technologies and the growing capabilities of smart phones and other handheld mobile devices has increased the frequency with which today's drivers are tempted to take their minds off of their driving. This is often made even more dangerous when drivers also take their eyes off the road and their hands off the wheel. When you consider

that smart phones — capable of texting, browsing the Internet, emailing and playing videos — are projected to account for more than half of the U.S. mobile phone market by 2011<sup>1</sup> and to eventually replace the desktop computer as the primary Internet portal,<sup>2</sup> it becomes clear that distracted driving, although not a *new* threat, is an *ever-increasing* threat to your employees. The fact is, now more than ever, the potential for employees to drive distracted poses an ominous challenge to any company's risk management program.

The growing level of public support for combating distracted driving can be seen in public opinion polls and in the more than 200 pieces of related legislation that have been passed or introduced since 2009.

<sup>1</sup> Nielson Report: US Smart Phone Penetration and Projections, March 2010

<sup>2</sup> Pew Research Center: The Future of Cloud Computing, June 2010

### WHAT CAN AN EMPLOYER DO?

Taking steps to educate your employees on the dangers of distracted driving is certainly a step in the right direction. People don't often think about the fact that each time they take their mind off the road, eyes off the road and/or hands off the wheel, they are putting themselves and others at risk.

Dedicating time in the workplace to emphasize safe driving messages through facts, communications and meaningful activities can help in the short run, but research shows the best way to ultimately change behavior is to combine education with legislation and enforcement.

*"What we have found again and again in different areas of highway safety is that education alone may have a short-term effect, but in the long run, people need to believe there are going to be consequences attached to their behavior."*

Anne McCartt, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

## BUILDING THE CASE FOR A CORPORATE CELL PHONE POLICY

- Each year cell phone distractions are associated with more than one million crashes, more than 500,000 injuries and nearly 6,000 fatalities.<sup>1</sup>
- The annual cost of crashes caused by cell phone use is estimated to be \$43 billion.<sup>2</sup>
- A 2010 survey of more than 5,000 mobile professionals found that more than half of workers admit to checking their smart phones while driving and 21 percent check their device every time it beeps, buzzes or rings.<sup>3</sup>
- A survey sponsored by Nationwide Insurance found that almost two-thirds of drivers who own cell phones said they feel pressure from colleagues, friends and family to be available by cell or other electronic communication devices at all times.<sup>4</sup>
- In a survey of more than 1100 organizations with a cell phone policy in place, over 70% of companies that prohibit the use of all wireless communications devices while driving (handheld and hands-free), did not see a decrease in productivity; more than 20% saw decreases in employee crash rates and property damage.<sup>5</sup>
- In recent years, numerous plaintiffs have filed and won multi-million dollar actions against employers for injuries arising from negligent driving of an employee who was distracted by the use of a cell phone.
- In a study of 36 leading companies with a combined fleet of 350,000 passenger vehicles logging nearly 7 billion miles, companies with the best fleet safety performance were more likely to ban the use of mobile phones (handheld **and** hands-free) for employees driving on company business.<sup>6</sup>

## CONSIDER THIS



Employers have the opportunity to follow what safety experts and legislators know to be an effective formula for changing behavior within their own business environments by issuing and enforcing corporate policies. In the workplace, the formula above translates to this:



If you are interested in developing a corporate policy to restrict or ban completely the use of mobile phones while driving on company business, comprehensive employer cell phone policy kits are available on the National Safety Council's website at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org) and at [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov).

Since a mobile phone policy has the potential to change the way your employees are used to doing business, moving toward cell phone restrictions will take time and planning.

- The National Safety Council suggests a minimum period of 4 weeks to roll-out a corporate cell phone policy. Larger organizations may need more time.



1 U.S. Department of Transportation, [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov)

2 Harvard Center for Risk Analysis

3 Careerbuilder-sponsored survey via Harris Interactive Poll, 2009

4 Nationwide Insurance Driving While Distracted Survey, 2008

5 National Safety Council Membership Survey Report, 2009

6 Network of Employers for Traffic Safety 2009 Benchmark Survey Report