

The Advisor

How to build a distracted driving policy

If your organization regularly has employees on the road, distracted driving prevention should be a key component of your fleet safety management program.

What constitutes distracted driving?

Lots of activities can pull someone's focus away from driving – not just cellphone use. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts driving distractions into three categories:

- **Visual distractions** that take a driver's eyes away from the road – things like setting the GPS, changing the radio, or looking at a phone.
- **Manual distractions** that keep a driver from having both hands on the wheel – things like eating, grooming or rearranging something in the vehicle.
- **Cognitive distractions** that keep a driver from fully concentrating on driving – things like talking on the phone, daydreaming, or even being tired.



It can be challenging to assess the true number of collisions caused by distractions, since many activities that cause distractions aren't trackable. But already this year in Ohio, there have been 1,860 accidents attributed to distracted driving, according to data from the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Four of those were fatal crashes, and 37 caused serious injuries.


Employees also self-report being distracted while they're on the road. In a recent survey from insurance company Travelers, 45 percent of employees said they answer calls, emails and texts while driving in case there's a work-related emergency. The survey also found that 25 percent of employees who have gotten in an accident while driving for work crashed because they were distracted by technology.

What should a distracted driving policy include?

A distracted driving policy should clearly state what behaviors aren't permitted while someone is behind the wheel for work. Often, best practice is to prohibit the use of any kind of handheld device while driving and require employees to pull over and park if they need to make a phone call or send a text.

Policies also can:

- Ban eating, drinking or grooming while driving
- Ask employees to set their GPS and radio prior to departing
- Mandate that cellphones be put in "do not disturb" mode or placed out of reach while driving
- Require drivers to take breaks after being on the road for a certain number of miles or hours



All policies should be written, and any employee who drives as part of their duties – whether they're driving their own vehicle or a company vehicle – should be asked to sign acknowledging they've read the policy and agree to follow it.

How should a distracted driving policy be enforced?

- **Lead by example:**
If your distracted driving policy bans cellphone use while employees are driving, it's important for managers to lead by example – avoid calling or texting employees when they're scheduled to be on the road, and don't expect them to answer emails or other communications until they take a break or arrive at their final location.
- **Build distracted driving prevention into training:**
Driver training should include information about the dangers of distracted driving, what constitutes a distraction, and how to avoid common distractions while behind the wheel.
- **Communicate the policy frequently:**
Remind employees about your distracted driving policy via bulletin boards, company emails or other internal communications to reinforce its importance.
- **Consider implementing a telematics system:**
Telematics systems can give employers insights into what's happening inside vehicles while employees are driving. But to be effective at helping prevent risky driving behaviors, the data needs to be regularly checked, and issues that are identified should be documented and corrected through training.

The team at Schauer Group can help your organization put together a distracted driving policy and plan that's right for your business needs. If you'd like to discuss this important issue further, please reach out to your advisor.

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SOURCES

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[Eliminate Distracted Driving at Home and Work | Travelers](#)

[Safeguard Your Business with a Distracted Driving Policy | Travelers](#)

[Defeat Distracted Driving | Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance](#)

[Four tips for implementing a distracted driving policy | Liberty Mutual Insurance](#)

[How Can Risk and Safety Professionals Reduce the Impact of Fleet Distracted Driving? | SambaSafety](#)



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