



DRIVING: DISTRACTED DRIVING



INTRODUCTION

Whether an employee is driving a commercial vehicle or a passenger vehicle, they have a responsibility to avoid distractions while driving. Driving comes with an inherent risk, but the risk of driving increases when distractions are added to the equation. Distracted driving is one of the biggest contributors to vehicle accidents that occur every day.

TYPES OF DISTRACTIONS

The three types of distractions include:

- Visual
- Manual
- Mental (Cognitive)

VISUAL DISTRACTIONS

Visual distractions cause drivers to take their eyes from the road for more than a couple of seconds. Visual distractions include:

- Changing radio stations
- Checking and adjusting GPS systems
- Looking for items on the floor of the vehicle
- Applying cosmetics
- Adjusting the air conditioning or heat in the vehicle
- Looking at a passenger

MANUAL DISTRACTIONS

Manual distractions cause drivers to take one or both hands off of the wheel, which may result in losing control of the vehicle or a delay in reaction time. Manual distractions include:

- Eating and drinking
- Smoking
- Using a cell phone (texting, watching videos, checking social media, etc.)
- Reaching for items (this includes searching through a purse or wallet)

COGNITIVE DISTRACTIONS

Cognitive distractions cause drivers to shift the mind's focus from the road to other things. Cognitive distractions include:

- Talking on the phone, other communication device, or with another passenger
- Road rage
- Daydreaming

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- Thinking about something that is upsetting
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol

HOW TO AVOID DISTRACTIONS WHILE DRIVING

NOTE: Employees should adhere to their company's cell phone and other portable communication device policies when driving commercial vehicles or company-owned passenger vehicles. Employees should adhere to all local and federal laws regarding cell phone use.

To help avoid distractions while driving, employees should do the following:

- Take care of any adjustments (mirrors, air conditioning, seats, radios, etc.) before leaving the parking area or at roadside stops.
 - Employees with communication radios should ensure that their radio is in a place that is easy to reach. Radio talk should be kept as short as possible.
- Ensure that addresses and destinations have been put into GPS systems prior to driving.
- Read and fill out all paperwork before driving. Paperwork can wait until you are off the road.
- Create a voice message on cell phones that states that you are currently driving and will call back when it is safe to do so.
- Do NOT text, talk, check social media, watch videos, or check email on your cell phone while driving. Cell phones should be put in a safe place before getting on the road. Text, calls, and emails can wait until you are off the road.
- When possible, do NOT eat or drink while driving. If you are hungry, pull off the road and go inside to eat or eat in your vehicle while parked in a parking area. If you have no other option other than to eat or drink while driving, only drink fluids that come with a lid from which you can drink (coffee, soup, etc.) and avoid messy foods (tacos, hamburgers, chili, etc.).

CONSEQUENCES OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

Drivers who cause an accident due to distracted driving can face multiple consequences. Such consequences include:

- Suspension or loss of a license
- Heavy fines to both the employee and company
- Criminal charges (including prison time)
- Paying liability to victims
- Death

CONCLUSION

Distracted driving is dangerous to both employees and the public. Drivers have enough to focus on when driving that distractions such as cell phones, paperwork, and eating can wait until the driver is in a safe place to take care of those obligations. Employees should adhere to their company's driving policies when operating a commercial vehicle or company-owned passenger vehicle. Employees are responsible for adhering to all local and federal motor laws.