

OSHA's Stance on Distracted Driving

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) top priority is keeping workers safe. While workplace fatalities have been decreasing in recent years, motor vehicle crashes continue to be one of the leading causes of death among American workers. As distracted driving dramatically increasing the risk of vehicle accidents, OSHA and the Department of Transportation (DOT) are working together to combat distracted driving for the safety of workers across the country.

OSHA's Distracted Driving Initiative

According to OSHA, employers should prohibit any work policy or practice that requires or encourages workers to text while driving, as it greatly increases the risk of being injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash.

While texting is not specifically addressed as an OSHA standard, the General Duty Clause in The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act) covers distracted driving by stating "employers must provide a workplace free of serious recognized hazards." It is well recognized that texting while driving dramatically increases the risk of a motor vehicle injury or fatality. This means you could be in violation of the OSH Act if your company:

- Requires employees to text while driving
- Organizes work so that texting is a practical necessity even if not a formal requirement
- Provides any sort of financial or other incentives that encourage workers to text while driving

If OSHA receives a credible complaint that an employer enforces or encourages any of these activities, they will investigate and, where necessary, issue citations and penalties to end such practices.

Supporting Safety in Your Workplace

Since distracted driving falls under the General Duty Clause and not a specific standard, there are no direct guidelines for how you must protect employees from the dangers of distracted driving. It is up to you as the employer to institute your own measures to keep employees safe. The easiest way to do this is to develop a policy that outlines how employees are to use mobile devices while carrying out their duties. Specifically noting that texting while driving is not allowed not only protects employees but also will keep your company from violating OSHA regulation.

For more on OSHA's Distracted Driving initiative, visit: www.osha.gov/distracted-driving.

Source: The Occupational Safety and Health Administration, www.OSHA.gov.

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