

Distracted Driving

by Amy Stewart, SOSE

Before you begin

Think about ways that you and your fellow employees can be distracted while driving. Review your company policy regarding distracted driving. Study local laws and regulations regarding distracted driving. Read articles and resources on distracted driving.

Methods and strategies for presentation

Through group discussion, the workers will raise each other's awareness of driving distractions. They will do this by incorporating hazard identification to the workplace whether in a formal fleet or the forgotten fleet (i.e., the sales person or delivery driver who drives company-compensated vehicle). Through peer-to-peer feedback and employee suggestions, the leader will offer feedback of employee suggestions to upper management where appropriate.

Introduction

Distracted driving is a diversion of the driver's attention while driving. When a driver participates in any non-driving activity, this has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving. Distracted driving occurs in three ways.

1. Visual distraction, which involves the driver taking eyes off the road.
2. Manual distraction, which involves the driver taking hands off the wheel.
3. Cognitive distraction is a distraction where the driver is not thinking about the driving task, which would include daydreaming or dealing with strong emotions.

Group discussion

Ask each person to provide one (or more) example of a distraction in each category. Then have the person offer a suggestion for how to minimize that distraction. (Write suggestions on flipchart.)

Category 1: Visual distractions - Eyes off the road

Internal distractions include:

- Reading maps/notes/newspaper;
- Applying make-up/shaving;
- Adjusting radio, iPod, CD;
- Programming GPS;
- Other occupants in the vehicle.

External distractions include:

- Snow/ice on windows/windshield;
- Sun glare;
- Billboards and signs;
- Pedestrians;
- Animals;
- Accidents or other events.

Category 2: Manual distractions - Hands off the wheel

- Programming a GPS
- Talking on a cell phone
- Selecting cell phone numbers
- Texting/emailing
- Adjusting climate controls/radio/seat/mirrors/steering wheel/safety belt/donning-doffing clothing
- Reaching for cargo/objects
- Smoking
- Consuming food or drink

Category 3: Cognitive distractions - Mind not on task

- Inattention/daydreaming
- Fatigue/drowsiness
- Stress from work, home, family, finances, etc.
- Physical and emotional conditions (anger, anxiety, grief)

Closing comments

1. Make sure employees understand the potential personal costs of distracted driving, including injuries, disabilities and loss of life to self and others.
2. Go over the suggestions generated from the group discussion.
3. Ensure employees understand the importance of pre-trip preparation and planning.
4. Encourage employees to record a message on their cell phones before they drive to tell people they are driving: "Hello, this is _____. I am driving right now. I will get back to you when it's safe to do so," and to activate it before driving.
5. Confirm employees understand company policy regarding distracted driving, as well as the consequences, ranging from discipline or retraining to loss of job.
6. Make sure employees who drive understand "hands free" laws and regulations.

Quiz – True or False

1. Distracted driving contributes to traffic crashes.
2. Distracted driving is a problem on the job.
3. Distracted driving is a lifestyle choice.
4. Distracted driving is more than mobile telephone usage.
5. There are many things that drivers can do to minimize potential for distracted driving.

References/resource material list

ANSI/ASSE Z-15.1-2006, Safe Practices for Motor Vehicle Operations

Commercial Driver License Manual, www.aamva.org

Digest of Ohio Motor Vehicle Laws, www.bmv.ohio.gov

Responsible Driver Handbook, www.PublicSafety.ohio.gov

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Work Related Roadway Crashes, Who's At Risk? NIOSH Publication No. 2004-137, March 2004.

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