

Loss Control Services – 5 Minute Safety Topic

Cell Phone Distraction

1. Cell Phone Mania: It is estimated at the end of 2011 there were 5.6 billion cell phone users worldwide. The United States has 1.03 cell phones for every person in the country – more cell phones than people - but Russia and Italy has that beat with 1.5 cell phones per person. “Can you hear me now?” < the catchphrase used by Verizon, has become part of our culture. Cell phone use has expanded into every activity of our lives, from emergency communication to picking products from a grocery shelf. It sometimes seems people have no idea what to do with a spare moment other than make a cell phone call.

2. Nuisance and/or Distraction? Whether you are in the presence of a user or you use a cell phone personally, using the cell phone is a significant distraction. Being distracted while driving, while operating tools and equipment, when walking across the street, when in public or at work, increases the risk of injuries and crashes. Lack of courtesy by inappropriate use of a cell phone at work, meetings, classes or other locations is a common complaint everywhere.

3. Is This a Problem? A 2011 California Traffic Safety Survey indicates that cell phone use and texting are a greater hazard than speeding or aggressive driving! Researchers have compared the level of distraction to a blood alcohol level of 0.08. Research also has shown that a cell phone conversation while driving is a greater distraction than conversing with a passenger. Drivers “reacted significantly slower to unexpected events in the first two minutes of the phone conversation and are, for a large part of the conversation, unaware of traffic movements around them.”

4. “DWT” – Driving While Texting: California has restricted the use of cell phones to be hands free when driving – texting is prohibited. Current law in California: Adult drivers (18 and older) are banned from using cell phones unless they employ hands-free devices; drivers may not use wireless devices to “to write, send, or read a text-based communication” — as in text messaging; minors are prohibited from using wireless phones while driving — with or without hands-free accessories; school bus operators and transit bus drivers prohibited from using cell phones while driving. There are added restrictions on drivers under age 18. Penalties include: First offense \$20. Other convictions, \$50; with court costs and penalties, the true costs of those tickets are \$76 and \$190, respectively. In 2010, there were 52,664 citations issued for distracted driving during a CHP “crackdown.” Your best bet is to pull over to the side of the road or pull into a parking lot if you must have the conversation.



1. Reference: http://www.chp.ca.gov/pdf/media/cell_phone_faq.pdf <http://handsfreeinfo.com/california-cell-phone-laws-legislation>