



CELL PHONES IN THE WORKPLACE

Our cell phones are powerful tools that allow us to have instant access to information and communication. When used appropriately, these devices can make our lives easier and more enjoyable, but when used at the wrong time and in the wrong manner, these same devices can get us in trouble at work and cause serious injury.

WORKPLACE CELL PHONE USE CAN BE DANGEROUS

- While most of us would never consider doing a puzzle or juggling while performing our jobs, we often don't give a second thought to sending and receiving text messages as we complete our daily tasks.
- Of the 3,000,000,000 texts sent each day, many them are now being sent from and received in the workplace. Not surprisingly, we are now seeing a rise in workplace injuries related to text messaging and other phone and PDA-related activities.
- We are all aware of the hazards of texting while driving but sending and receiving text messages at work can be just as dangerous.
- Just like other workplace distractions such as chattering with co-workers, horseplay or having our mind on something other than our task, being distracted by using the phone also causes us to lose our focus on the job at hand.

USING CELL PHONES AT WORK ADVERSELY AFFECTS OUR PRODUCTION LEVEL

- Most organizations have restrictions regarding cell phone use and texting. It is your responsibility to know how your company's rules apply to you and always follow them accordingly.
- Of course, even if no published rules exist, attempting to use your phone for texting, updating social media or even checking the weather while performing any type of hazardous job function or driving is just plain dangerous and should not be attempted.
- It's just takes a little common sense to distinguish those tasks where texting isn't particularly hazardous and those where being distracted, even for a moment, could cause major injuries and property damage.
- Of course, even in a non-hazardous situation, sending and receiving personal text messages and performing other phone based activities not only takes your focus off of your job tasks, it also takes time; time that should be spent performing your job.
- Simply stated, employees who are texting at work are not doing what they are getting paid to do. For this reason, these workers may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Using our phones to do such things as watch TV, stay updated on news and social media and play video games affects our production level. Phone use in the workplace must be restricted; the impact to safety and productivity is just too great to do otherwise.



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- If cell phone use is prohibited at your workplace, hiding in closets and frequently visiting restrooms to send and receive texts is still a violation of company policy for which you may also be punished.
- Leaving your workstation unattended so you can leave the building to use your phone is also a bad idea.
- Instead, simply get in the habit of sending and receiving text messages before you clock in, during one of your breaks or after you clock out.
- Believe it or not, even though you may want to stay in constant contact with your social and family life, very few things really require that you do so.

FOLLOWING THE COMPANY PLAN FOR EMERGENCY CONTACT

- Of course, most companies have a procedure that allows employees to be reached in an actual emergency. It may be calling into the switchboard and asking you to be paged, or it may be calling the direct line of the shift supervisor or plant manager, who will then come get you from your workstation.
- Whatever the plan, make sure your family and friends know what it is so you may be contacted in a true emergency.
- Don't use the excuse of needing to be reached in an emergency as a reason to violate company policies limiting phone use.

APPROPRIATE USE OF COMPANY-OWNED CELL PHONES

- Of course, while many companies forbid texting and cell phone use altogether, others allow it under certain circumstances. In fact, some employers prefer to communicate with certain workers through text messaging or email sent to a cell phone or PDA.
- Be aware that if your company provides you with a cell phone, any messages you send or receive on it are considered company property. Your employer has the right to monitor these messages, so you should not expect them to be private.
- When using a company-owned cell phone, refrain from sending any messages that could be considered harassing, pornographic or disruptive to other employees.
- Messages that may offend others based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or political affiliation should not be sent.
- When communicating with your supervisors by text message, don't discuss such things as your pay, hours worked, medical issues, absences or similar matters. These matters should be handled formally in writing so both parties have a clear record for their files.

RECOGNIZING & RESPONDING TO UNSAFE CELL PHONE USE

- To avoid committing unsafe acts, we must make safety our top priority in every task we perform.



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- We must adopt an attitude that our primary goal is doing every job as safely as possible. Maintaining this attitude will help us recognize situations where use of cell phones would not only interfere in our ability to perform our tasks without injury, but also hinder us from completing our jobs in a timely manner.
- We must be able to recognize and reject the excuses we often make for texting when we know it is unsafe or prohibited by policy.
- Finally, we must be willing to speak up when we see people putting themselves in harm's way by texting while performing their job duties.
- It takes "two to text." If you are on the receiving end of prohibited or unsafe texts being sent at work, don't respond. Let them know, in person, that texting at work is unsafe and inappropriate and that you will not participate.
- Like other safety issues, putting a stop to dangerous texting or other distracting phone use requires a culture of speaking up and refusing to participate. When employees help to create this type of work environment, it creates a safer workplace for everyone.

So, what it all boils down to is this: our phones are powerful tools which allow us to have instant access to information and communication. When used appropriately, these devices can make our lives easier and more enjoyable, but when used at the wrong time and in the wrong manner, these same devices can get us in trouble at work and cause serious injury. It's up to you to use your safety sense and your understanding of your organization's rules and procedures to know the difference.