



Staying safe and focused behind the wheel

Avoiding distracted driving in commercial motor vehicles

We know how important your drivers' safety is to you. But it's important to remember that safety behind the wheel goes beyond routine equipment checks and driver wellness programs. It's up to you to help your drivers avoid bad habits behind the wheel, like distracted driving.

Driver distractions, in their various forms, are a leading cause of crashes involving truck drivers. And in today's connected world, these distractions are no longer limited to eating, tuning the radio, and talking on the CB. Your drivers have access to an array of in-cab electronic devices, including cell phones, route navigation systems, internet-connected devices, and various telematics devices.

According to the DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,477 people were killed—and an estimated 391,000 were injured—in distraction-related crashes in 2015.* When your drivers are behind the wheel, they need to limit or eliminate distractions, or your business could be held liable for an accident. That's why it's important for you to educate your drivers on safe, focused driving.

Drivers often use cell phones when communicating with dispatchers, customers, family, and friends. While it seems innocuous, there is growing evidence linking accidents and cell phone use. Dialing, reaching to answer a call, or retrieving a dropped phone—if it takes your driver's eyes and attention off the road—is risky. Plus, using a phone can affect manual and cognitive performance, leading to fewer mirror checks, longer braking times, failure



to maintain safe following distances, and poor lane positioning. Even hands-free devices can be distracting, because they still take attention away from the road.

Motor carriers like you can be held legally liable for drivers' negligent acts while dispatched. When an accident involves a driver using a cell phone—even under legal circumstances—it's common for the claimant to claim the commercial motor

vehicle (CMV) driver was distracted, directly contributing to the accident.

Federal law prohibits texting while driving a CMV. The use of handheld mobile telephones is also prohibited. Many states and local municipalities have stricter regulations prohibiting all use, including hands-free devices.

* Data from <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>



ESTABLISHING SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR USING TELEMATICS DEVICES

Many companies like yours are adopting safety guidelines, training, and enforcement policies that address the risks of using cell phones and other on-board telematics while driving. By prohibiting your drivers from using cell phones—both handheld and hands-free—and other devices while driving, you can take a significant step toward limiting your liability exposure.

In addition, you and your drivers can work to incorporate the following safety tips:

For motor carriers

- Don't pressure your drivers to conduct business (communicating with dispatchers or customers, for example) while driving.
- Monitor driver crash experience related to the use of cell phones, along with in-vehicle internet access and other devices.
- Enforce a company policy prohibiting the use of these technologies while driving.

For drivers

- Never place or answer cell phone calls while operating your vehicle.
- Pull over if you need to place a call.
- Allow a passenger to handle phone calls, or allow incoming calls to go to voicemail.
- Be aware of stricter local regulations governing cell phones and other telematics.
- Avoid other distracting activities, like eating, drinking, or adjusting non-critical vehicle controls while driving.



At Sentry, we're committed to helping you protect your business and your drivers. You can find more information on distracted driving prevention by visiting www.distracted.gov and through sentry.com/sentryconnect. You can also reach out to your safety consultant at 800-443-9655.

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