



Cell Phone Distraction

It is estimated at the end of 2008 there were 4 billion cell phone users worldwide. Can you hear me now?, the catchphrase used by Verizon, has become part of our culture. Cell phone use has expanded into every activity in 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.

Whether you are in the presence of a user or you use a cell phone personally, using the 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.

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. Many states have banned the use of cell phones without a hands-free device. Although that may help a little, the distraction is still present. 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.

Starpoint does not permit employees who are driving company vehicles to transport individuals receiving services to use a hand-held cellular telephone for calls or text messaging. Starpoint requires the safe use of its cellular telephones by employees while conducting business. Employees should not use cellular telephones while driving because of safety concerns, but should instead pull to the side of the road to make or receive telephone calls. If an employee is unable to pull over or stop before receiving a cellular telephone call, they should let the call go to voice message and retrieve the message when in a safe situation.

During work time, employees are discouraged from using personal cellular telephones or similar devices. Calls or text messages should only be made or received during breaks and meal times. Employees who have excessive personal cellular telephone calls or text messages will be subject to corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including, termination.