



Distracted Driving Policies Save Lives, Protect Organizations

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Jennifer Sandberg was quoted in *SHRM* on May 19, 2015. The article “Distracted Driving Policies Save Lives, Protect Organizations” discussed how organizations that fail to create and enforce policies prohibiting employees from using their phones while driving put workers in jeopardy and increase employer liability.

Jennifer was quoted on the importance of establishing a distracted driving policy.

“Distracted driving clearly includes entering phone numbers or talking on a cellphone, even hands-free, and texting, e-mailing, or accessing other smartphone or Internet-based features,” said Jennifer. “Yet most employers do not have a long-standing distracted driving policy but rather have just a hands-free-mobile-device-use policy. If they have a policy at all,” she said.

An unwritten policy of “drive safely” isn’t good enough anymore. Employers need a distracted driving policy or at least a hands-free policy, said Jennifer. Policies should be practical, enforceable, and designed to protect employees and employers in all possible scenarios.

What is practical and enforceable may vary by industry and the types of workplace driving that occur, but employees need to be trained to comply with any applicable state law, said Jennifer.

Simply writing and communicating a policy is not enough. Although not a shield from lawsuits, strictly enforced policies can help reduce risk of crashes, injuries and costly outcomes. “Cellphone usage and texting are verifiable,” Jennifer said. “When an accident occurs, records exist that show whether a driver was using a cellphone. In our legal system, such ‘proof’ means trouble for the user of the cellphone and the user’s employer if the user was either conducting work on the cellphone or driving for work,” she said.

Employers must decide what level of compliance to enforce, said Jennifer. A policy that states “never ever engage in any form of distracted driving or you will be terminated immediately” is the wrong move, she said. “While such a policy might be theoretically perfect, it is practically imperfect. Some form of distracted driving is inevitable and immediate termination may not be the answer.” Jennifer advised employers to develop a policy that works for their industry and their drivers and “is a policy that you can enforce.”

To read the full article, please visit [SHRM](#).

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