

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

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Distracted Driving

Don't let distractions take the wheel

Afraid to use driver-facing cameras?

What are the specific regulations for
cell phone use in a CMV?

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely



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Lucero Truszkowski

Lucero Truszkowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Distractions coming from all directions!

We've all seen it — the vehicle ahead slowly drifting from the center of the lane to the shoulder and back. Or a driver gradually slowing down for no apparent reason and then suddenly speeding up. Or even a driver sitting at a light that's been green for more than 10 seconds. In these situations, there's a good chance the driver was distracted and focusing on something other than driving.

Professional drivers must know how to recognize and react to signs of another distracted driver. The best thing to do is maintain a safe distance, move over when possible, and pull over and wait if things get too dangerous.

But other distracted drivers aren't the only threat to worry about. Sometimes the threat is coming from inside the truck! Many drivers will admit to driving when distracted at some point or another. Luckily, there are some useful steps your drivers can take that should help them avoid this bad habit:

- Adjust all vehicle controls (radio, A/C, mirrors, etc.) **before** driving.
- Don't reach down or behind the driver's seat, open the glove box, or try to wipe down the windows while driving.
- Don't groom or try to get dressed while driving. Pull over to remove layers of clothing or to add them on.
- When driving in unfamiliar areas, plan the route ahead of time. Pull over and stop to read a map or to adjust a GPS.

Use coaching and corrective action to reduce risk

Event-driven telematic data or dash cam video clips are vital tools to help detect and reduce distraction. Consider using a road-facing or driver-facing camera with artificial intelligence that can detect events that warrant coaching and corrective action, including:

- Unintended lane departures,
- Hard-brake events,
- Following too close,
- Handheld cell phone use,
- Radio adjustments,
- Excessive drowsiness, and
- Eyes off the roadway.

If you're using technology to monitor distracted driving, make sure your drivers know what to expect. Be sure they're aware of your company's policy and the steps you'll take following a distracted driving event. ♦



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — DISTRACTED DRIVING

Don't let distractions take the wheel

Distracted driving is everywhere! Why? Because becoming distracted from the road is much easier than most people realize. Distractions happen any time a driver takes their eyes off the road, their hands off the wheel, or their mind off driving.

This might mean glancing at a phone, turning up the radio, chatting on speakerphone, or grabbing a quick snack. Even using a GPS system or admiring the local scenery count as distractions that take a driver's focus off the road, which increases the risk of accidents. It only takes a split second to turn one small distraction into a major disaster.

TIP: Distracted driving takes many forms. Make sure your drivers understand how to minimize the odds of becoming distracted before getting behind the wheel.

What counts as distracted driving?

Distractions can be visual, physical, mental, or a combination of all three. Any non-driving activity is a potential distraction that increases a driver's risk of crashing.

Visual distractions take your eyes away from the road. Some examples include changing the radio station or other entertainment; looking at a passenger; checking a GPS device; or looking at the scenery, billboards, or other cars.

Physical distractions take your hands off the wheel. This can include activities like reaching for food or drinks; removing or adding a layer of clothing; or adjusting the mirrors, heating/cooling settings, or seat position.

Mental distractions take your mind off the road. This might happen while daydreaming, listening to an audiobook, having a conversation on the phone or with a passenger, or dealing with stress or anxiety.

TIP: Ask your drivers if they would close their eyes while driving 200 yards on a dare. They'll probably say no. Then remind your drivers that taking their eyes off the road, even to glance at a billboard, can have the same results.

Noticing other distracted drivers

Defensive driving means having the right attitude when driving. Your driver is the only person in charge of their own safety.

Other distracted and inattentive drivers on the road are some of your drivers' toughest challenges. Remind your drivers to get in the habit of always playing "what if" in their heads. Make sure they know how to identify the warning signs of other distracted drivers. These signs can include:

- **Lingering at intersections.** Drivers who fail to move forward when the signal changes are often too focused on something inside their vehicle to notice.
- **Drifting lanes.** Swerving within lanes or drifting over the center line indicates a driver whose mind is somewhere else.
- **Braking suddenly.** Distracted drivers leave themselves less time to react and often end up braking suddenly to avoid real or perceived obstacles.
- **Tailgating.** Drivers whose eyes aren't focused on the road don't always realize how close they're getting to the vehicles in front of them. ♦

TIP: Learning how to avoid and identify distracted driving is one of the most important parts of good defensive driving.





TRAINING HANDOUT — DISTRACTED DRIVING

Types of distracted driving



Visual distractions

- Changing the radio station or other entertainment
- Looking at a passenger
- Checking a GPS device
- Taking in the scenery



Physical distractions

- Reaching for food or drink
- Grooming or applying makeup
- Removing or adding a layer of clothing
- Adjusting mirrors, heating/cooling, or seat position



Mental distractions

- Daydreaming
- Listening to an audiobook
- Having a conversation
- Experiencing stress or anxiety ♦





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — DISTRACTED DRIVING

1. What types of distractions do drivers face on the road?
 - A. Visual
 - B. Physical
 - C. Mental
 - D. All of the above

2. It's okay to have a long conversation while driving as long as the person you're talking to is in the passenger seat.
 - A. True
 - B. False

3. Which of these count as a visual distraction?
 - A. Looking at the rearview mirror
 - B. Taking time to read an interesting billboard
 - C. Changing the radio station
 - D. Both B and C

4. Distractions can happen any time a driver takes their eyes off the road, their hands off the wheel, or their mind off the driving.
 - A. True
 - B. False

5. One way to tell that another driver is distracted is if the driver:
 - A. Starts drifting between lanes
 - B. Maintains a reasonable follow distance
 - C. Flashes their lights at other vehicles
 - D. Regularly passes vehicles in the left lane ♦

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____



Afraid to use driver-facing cameras? Here's guidance to help with your plan

You may question whether driver-facing cameras (DFCs) are worth risking pushback from drivers and leadership. However, a compelling case exists for adding DFCs and coaching to enhance a carrier's safety program.

Pointing out the supporting facts and using the two checklists below may make the case easier to sell.

DFCs help reduce crashes and protect drivers, carriers in litigation

To convince drivers to give DFCs a try, convey what's in it for them. The passenger car driver is at fault in at least 70 percent of fatal truck-passenger vehicle-involved crashes, according to Department of Transportation statistics.

Road-facing cameras only show a partial view of what happened before a crash. The April 2023 American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) study "Issues and Opportunities with Driver-Facing Cameras (DFC)" found:

- DFC footage helps exonerate commercial truck drivers in 49 percent of litigation cases and 52 percent of insurance claims where video footage was available.
- Driver approval of DFCs was 87 percent higher when carriers used the video footage for safety programs, driver coaching, and training than when there was no proactive safety use.

Carrier leaders should know that DFC use could reduce crashes as well as increase the chance of exoneration. ATRI's 2022 "Predicting Truck Crash Involvement" study found that the chance of a future recordable crash when a driver was convicted of careless, inattentive, or fatigued driving was 62 percent greater. Proper coaching with DFC footage can help eliminate distracted driving or disprove claims of truck driver distraction.

Checklists to improve DFC acceptance

The turnover of well-performing drivers is a genuine concern. However, coaching to eliminate unsafe habits and recognize drivers, especially newer ones, increases their confidence, reduces frustration, and improves retention.

Policy considerations to alleviate driver privacy concerns and increase acceptance of DFCs include but are not limited to:

- Require driver consent before collecting, storing, or using video clips or biometric data (fingerprint, retinal scan, voice signature).
- Include how and when drivers will be recognized and rewarded.

- Prioritize the focus behaviors (such as distracted or drowsy driving and seat belt use).
- Avoid excessive coaching for minor incidents.
- Record video clips for "x" seconds before and after a triggered event for coaching or legal defense, and do not continuously record, especially when the vehicle ignition is off.
- Limit video access to safety managers/directors as much as possible and prevent unauthorized access.
- Refrain from monitoring drivers in real-time except in a company-determined emergency.
- Prohibit audio recording to respect driver privacy and avoid legal issues in dual-party consent states.

A smooth transition plan can include these 10 steps:

1. Continuously emphasize the goals of retaining drivers, reducing crash risk, and protecting the business.
2. Run a small group test with DFCs switched on for 2-3 months.
3. Use a baseline period of 2-3 weeks with no coaching.
4. Select locations with the highest risk-loss experience.
5. Use well-respected drivers and naysayers in the test groups.
6. Use driver feedback to adjust along the way.
7. Be transparent and share results and feedback in town-hall-style meetings.
8. Train coaches to increase driver willingness to change behavior.
9. Develop safety performance scores and incentives to improve.
10. Publicize wins of exoneration with driver privacy in mind. ♦



Key to remember: Using DFCs with coaching reduces the risk of crashes, increases the chance of driver exoneration, and has little impact on driver turnover when following a proper transition plan.



Expert Help

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Next Month's Topic: Materials handling/safe loading

A loading dock can be a busy and dangerous place. It's important that drivers understand the unique hazards of working at a loading dock and know how to proceed safely. ♦

Expert Help: Questions of the Month

Question: What are the specific regulations for cell phone use in a CMV? Are hands-free devices okay?

Answer: Section 392.82 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) prohibits the use of a hand-held mobile telephone while driving a commercial motor vehicle.

Use of a hand-held mobile telephone includes using at least one hand to hold a phone to conduct voice communication, dialing or answering a phone by pressing more than a single button, or reaching for a phone in a manner that requires the driver to maneuver so they are no longer in a seated driving position and restrained by a seat belt.

Under this regulation, if the driver uses Bluetooth or another device and is able to dial or answer the phone by pressing a single button, it is acceptable. If the driver has to press more than one button, it's not acceptable.

Question: Are there any other regulations related to distracted driving I should know?

Answer: Another rule we might mention is Section 390.17, "Additional equipment and accessories." It says:

"Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit the use of additional equipment and accessories, not inconsistent with or prohibited by this subchapter, provided such equipment and accessories do not decrease the safety of operation of the commercial motor vehicles on which they are used."

That's the rule that the FMCSA relied upon to prohibit texting before they adopted their texting rule. Any type of "equipment or accessories" that detract from safe driving can be seen as prohibited under 390.17. Otherwise, for distractions like food, radios, etc., state and local laws might come into play. ♦

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EDITOR: Lucero Truszkowski

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J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc.[®]

3003 Breezewood Lane, P.O. Box 368
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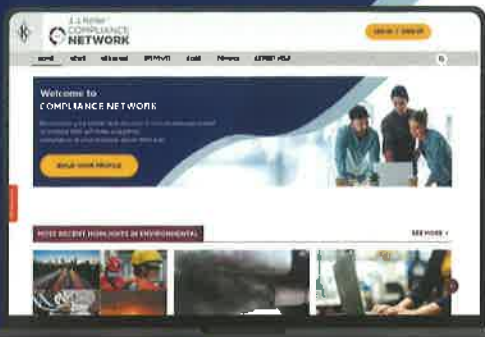
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