

## **Toolbox Talk: Cell Phone Distractions**

### **Introduction/Overview:**

We've all been behind the driver who doesn't seem to know the light has turned green or we've noticed the car that drifts between the center line and right side of the road or maybe they can't seem to decide on 55 MPH or 70 MPH. This person may be drunk or having a medical emergency, or perhaps they are texting or are on the phone. While driving distracted can have deadly consequences, so can walking while being distracted by your phone. The internet has hundreds of videos of people walking into signs and trees or falling into holes and ponds. These videos may give us a laugh, but serious injury and death have occurred from the distraction of using cell phones while walking or driving.

### **Statistics:**

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 6,283 pedestrians were killed in the United States in 2018. On average that's one death every 84 minutes. While it's not clear how many of these are a direct result of distracted walking, the total rate of pedestrian fatalities compared to overall road deaths is getting worse each year. While not all are directly related to cell phone distractions, it is clear that this has become a big issue as several states have attempted to ban cell phone use while walking in addition to phone restrictions while driving. Distracted walking has become such an issue that Honolulu, Hawaii has passed a law against texting while crossing the street. The NHTSA states that in 2018 2,841 people were killed by distracted drivers.

### **Talking Points:**

- Never text and drive.
  - Use hands-free calling while driving.
  - Instead of texting while walking, move out of the way of others, then stop to complete your message.
  - Heads up and phone down while driving or walking. Stay aware of your surroundings.
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Developed by:

## **Final Thoughts:**

I know what you are saying “But I can do it. I’m good at multitasking.” The human brain can only handle one complex task at a time. What you are doing when you think you are multitasking is rapidly switching between tasks. In the article “Why You Can’t Multitask” in Psychology Today, David Burkus states, “The transition between activities in task switching isn’t seamless. It costs the brain a few moments to adjust each time you switch. By some estimates, when you attempt to multitask, you end up taking 40 percent longer to finish than if you would give one task your complete attention.” These gaps in your attention can get you or someone else injured or killed.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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## **References:**

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Pedestrian Safety](#)

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Distracted Driving](#)

[Psychology Today, November 15, 2018  
Why You Can’t Multitask](#)

[ABC News October 25, 2017  
Honolulu passes law that makes texting while crossing the street illegal](#)