

A man wearing a dark baseball cap and a light-colored jacket is sitting in the driver's seat of a vehicle. He is holding a cell phone to his ear and appears to be in conversation. The background is a blurred view of the road and other vehicles, suggesting he is driving. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white box containing text.

# **No Cell Phone While Driving & Fleet Safety: A Winning Connection**

Cell-phone use while driving has become the new “drunk driving,” and is responsible for an ever-increasing number of fatal highway crashes. While it is imperative for fleets to implement no-cell-phone-while-driving policies, enforcing it can be difficult, and requires driver monitoring technology.

Distracted driving isn't new: since the invention of the automobile it has always posed a safety risk for drivers. What is new are the types of distractions tempting drivers. As more and more technology has been introduced over the years, drivers have more to be distracted by — and the problem has grown worse.

Chief among these distractions are cell phones, which have been shown to be one of the leading causes of distracted driving accidents and fatalities. As drivers who talk, text, or access the Internet while driving pose a serious risk to the safety of themselves and others, it's clear that cell phones should be at the forefront of fleets' safety concerns. Because of the high level of risk associated with cell-phone use while driving, implementing a no cell phone or hands free policy is critical and should be a central tenet of any fleet's safety program.

## THE DANGERS OF CALLING AND DRIVING

### Distracted driving is a growing scourge on today's roads.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every day nine people die and more than 1,000 are injured in crashes as a result of distracted driving<sup>1</sup>. The National Safety Council (NSC) estimates that cell phone use alone accounts for 27% of vehicular crashes<sup>2</sup>, making it one of the primary causes of driver distraction. Likewise, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2016, 14%<sup>3</sup> of all fatal distraction-affected crashes reported to have involved a cell phone. This problem is even more prevalent for fleets, as mobile-device use is the cause of 25% of all commercial crashes. And it's a costly problem: In addition to the loss of valued employees, in 2013, work-related crashes cost employers an average of \$65,000 per non-fatal injury and more than 10 times that — \$671,000 — per death<sup>4</sup>.

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Perhaps one of the reasons cell phone use while driving is so ubiquitous is it includes so much more than talking on the

phone, including using the phone to get directions, reading or sending text messages, surfing the Internet, posting to social media, and even participating in a video chat. A 2016 NSC survey of more than 3,400 adult drivers across the U.S. revealed that respondents used cell phones in a myriad of ways while driving — and the number of drivers engaging in these behaviors is significant:

- 19%** made or answered phone calls with handheld devices.
- 51%** made or answered calls hands-free with headsets, speakerphones, and in-vehicle systems.
- 32%** reviewed or sent text messages.
- 23%** reviewed or sent an e-mail.
- 23%** glanced at, read, or posted social media messages.
- 21%** surfed the Internet.
- 19%** looked at, took, or posted photos or videos.
- 14%** watched TV or a movie on the phone.
- 14%** participated in a video chat<sup>5</sup>.

Why are these behaviors so dangerous? Talking on the phone and driving is one of the most dangerous activities because it distracts drivers in all three of the fundamental ways:

- » **Visually**, i.e. taking your eyes off the road
- » **Manually**, i.e., taking your hands off the wheel
- » **Cognitively**, i.e., taking your mind off of driving

Researchers at the University of Iowa found that simply listening on the phone while driving creates a lag in the mind as it shifts attention from one thought or task to another<sup>6</sup>. In their experiments, researchers tracked eye movements while asking subjects to answer true or false questions. Respondents who answered the questions took about twice as long to direct their eyes to a new object on the screen than those not required to respond or who were asked no questions at all. The experiments mimic drivers using a cell phone or having a conversation with a passenger while driving. Researchers found the delay to return one's attention back to the original object (i.e., the road) is about 40 milliseconds, or four-hundredths of a second. While that may seem like an insignificant amount of time, the delay



compounds: Every time the brain is distracted, the time to disengage from one action and initiate another action gets longer. This snowball effect means drivers can become oblivious to a lot of what is going on around them.

Another study by The American Automobile Association (AAA) showed drivers can remain distracted for 27 seconds after making a call, even if they use a hands-free device<sup>7</sup>. That means a car going 25 mph can travel the length of three football fields before a driver's brain fully "recovers" from the act of dialing a phone number. When drivers shift their attention to interacting with the device, they stop scanning, don't anticipate hazards, and don't notice objects that are in their way. Toggling between the tasks of driving and dialing is comparable to a driver trying to balance their checkbook while driving down the road. In all, the National Highway Traffic Administration reports making a call while driving increases the risk of an accident by 2.8 times.

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Texting while driving is also dangerous and combines all three types of distraction: eyes off the road, one hand on the wheel, mind on the text. When you send or read a text message, you take your eyes off the road for about 5 seconds, long enough to cover the length a football field while driving at 55 mph<sup>8</sup>. It's like driving with your eyes closed.

## **CELL-PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING IS A GROWING PROBLEM**

As mobile technology offers drivers more to do with their phones, the more distracted they've become.

According to Zendrive's 2019 "Distracted Driving Study," which analyzed over 160 billion miles of driver data, drivers were found to be 10% more distracted behind the wheel than they were in the year prior. The report also found that the number of "cell phone addicts" has doubled. According to the report, a phone addict is someone who uses a phone 10% or more of the time while operating their vehicle<sup>9</sup>.

The report reveals some startling behaviors:

- » Phone addicts spend three times more drive time using their phones.
- » 28% of their driving time is spent actively ignoring the road.
- » Phone addicts are more frequently on the road — 1.5 times more often than the general driving population.
- » Even more startling: "Phone addicts" have replaced drunk drivers as the top roadway threat today.

**Phone addicts, drivers who use a phone 10% or more of the time while operating their vehicle, have replaced drunk drivers as the top roadway threat today.**

And worse, phone addicts don't realize they have a problem. While 85% of respondents acknowledged distracted driving is a problem, nearly half (47%) admitted to using their phones 10% or more of the time while driving, classifying them as phone addicts. Despite admitting to distracted driving behavior, 93% of these same respondents still felt they are "pretty safe" or "extremely safe" drivers, suggesting they don't see the problem with their own behavior.

The problem is also growing as millennials comprise a greater portion of the workforce. This incoming class of drivers is more likely to use a cell phone while driving than previous generations already in the workforce.

According to a 2019 study from Liberty Mutual Insurance, 86% of American Millennials say they use their cell phone when behind the wheel<sup>10</sup>. That makes U.S. Millennial cell phone use while driving approximately 30% higher than that of the average U.S. survey respondent. By comparison, 72% of U.S. Gen Xers and just 49% of U.S. Baby Boomers said they have used a cell phone behind the wheel.

The study also found that Millennials engage in a variety of cell phone uses while driving:

**79%** of respondents said they glance at incoming calls and texts.

**53%** admit to sending email or texts while driving.

**72%** say they glance at cell phone notifications.

**33%** use social media apps while driving.

Again, the percentage of Millennial respondents engaging in these behaviors far exceeds older generations: While 72% of U.S. Millennials say they glance at cell phone notifications, only 55% of U.S. Gen Xers and 31% of U.S. Boomers admit to the same. And while one-third (33%) of U.S. Millennials use social media apps while driving, 15% of U.S. Gen Xers and 3% of U.S. Boomers say they engage in such practices.

Cell-phone use while driving is a clear danger and a growing problem — and it will only grow worse for fleets without intervention.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A "NO CALLING" POLICY

To combat the ever-growing distraction of cell phones, companies with commercial fleets must implement and enforce "no calling" policies.

Policies about mobile-phone use must be a key element of a fleet safety policy. The policy should make clear that:

- » Drivers should not make or take calls — even from a superior.
- » Superiors should be prohibited from calling a subordinate if they know they'll be on the road — so drivers aren't tempted to answer.
- » All forms of cell-phone use are prohibited while driving, including texting, using the Internet, and accessing social media apps.

The policy should also outline the penalties for not following established protocol.

While fleets must provide a very clear policy, the difficulty lies in enforcing it. Providing guidance to employees to eliminate cell-phone use while driving only goes so far, even if you have a formal policy in place. Even when drivers are aware of the risks to their jobs — and their personal safety — many don't consider their own use a problem.

For instance, a National Safety Council survey found that, while 67% of respondents felt they were at risk because another driver was distracted by technology, only 25% said their own technology distractions were putting others at risk<sup>11</sup>. People often believe they are better drivers than those around them. This "it's not me" attitude prompts drivers to feel they are above the rules. So even if you have a fleet safety policy in place, it can be difficult to enforce.

According to a survey by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, almost 80% of adult drivers think they can easily manage to text while driving. It's this type of mindset that fleet managers must change<sup>5</sup>.

So while a "no cell phone use" policy may outline behaviors to avoid, it won't change the culture overnight. Drivers may still fear missing calls while driving, and supervisors may continue to expect drivers to pick up when they call. And even the most conscientious employee may bend the rule if it's an "emergency."



## TECHNOLOGY CAN STOP CELL PHONE USE — AND CHANGE THE SAFETY CULTURE OF YOUR COMPANY

Technology is the key to truly enforce a “no cell phone” policy. While a driver may say he or she is following the policy, without technology, there is no way to really know.

Telematics can help identify when drivers are using cell phones in their vehicles. For instance, hard braking may indicate distracted driving. If telematics data show a consistent pattern of hard braking, cell-phone use may be the cause. This data can help fleet managers understand there is a problem and coach drivers accordingly.

It's no different than idling. Before telematics, fleets understood that idling wasted fuel. But armed with data about when and how long vehicles spent idling brings the problem to light. Fleets can then coach drivers and compare data month over month (or more frequently) to measure an improvement (or lack thereof) in behavior.

Telematics data can also help identify drivers who exhibit unsafe driving behaviors and monitor their improvement. Telematics can assist in identifying the behavior and coaching to it, but they still aren't able to physically prevent dangerous behaviors. And some drivers may continue to choose to perform risky activities, like using their cell phones while driving. A few may even be able to “game” the system for awhile. While telematics data may reveal a problem, this information alone doesn't stop it.

Disabling a cell phone while driving is the most effective way to solve the problem — especially as the “addiction” to phones grows more prevalent. To do so, fleets can use cell

phone blocking apps and devices. These prevent drivers from making or accepting calls, texting or accessing the Internet while the vehicle is in motion, and help drivers stay focused on driving instead.

Disabling cell phones while in motion not only stops the problem — it changes the culture. As drivers are physically unable to use their phones in their cars, over time they lose the urge to reach for the phone while in their vehicle. And, without the capability to see who might be calling, there is no temptation to answer a call. When the fleet is fully equipped with this technology, employees at all levels come to understand that a driver won't — and can't — answer a call while on the road. This changes the expectation of drivers and removes any stress about missing a call. As behaviors and expectations change, fleets are able to create a safety culture — not just a policy.

The ORIGOSafeDriver solution does this and more.

## ORIGOSAFEDRIVER ENDS CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING

ORIGOSafeDriver is an integrated app and telematics solution that keeps drivers accountable by removing the temptation to use their phones while driving.

By pairing telematics hardware that syncs with a mobile app, once your driver's vehicle goes into motion, it renders the driver's phone useless. All a driver has to do is log in to the app once and then can remain logged in. No further action is required to make the technology functional. If a user tries to drive a company vehicle without having logged into the app, they will be alerted to log in — and will continue to hear a beep until a log in happens. If, after two minutes, the driver still hasn't logged in, the fleet manager will receive an SMS notification and can take the appropriate action.

With ORIGOSafeDriver, drivers can't ignore the rules — and fleets can stop dangerous distracted driving behavior before it even happens.

ORIGOSafeDriver also integrates with a telematics solution. Fleets can receive phone utilization reports with metrics to measure drivers. As a result, fleets get another data point for driver scorecards and additional opportunities to coach drivers and create a stronger safety culture.

ORIGOSafeDriver is a proven, simple, effective tool to reduce or eliminate distracted driving among commercial fleets and reinforce your fleet safety policy. ORIGOSafeDriver turns policy into safe behavior.

With ORIGOSafeDriver, drivers can't ignore the rules — and fleets can stop dangerous distracted driving behavior before it even happens.

After the ramp-up period, Origo has been shown to change drivers' perception of risk and even change their behavior when driving their personal vehicles. ORIGOSafeDriver is a simple, effective tool to reduce or eliminate distracted driving among commercial fleets and reinforce your fleet safety policy.

While technology is crucial to hold drivers accountable and keep them safe, first and foremost fleet managers and company leaders need to embed safety into the culture with a strong safety policy. Technology is then the means by which drivers are held accountable to that policy. Fundamentally, having the technology that reflects your policy and working in tandem with it will help you keep drivers safe and costs related to crashes low.

To learn more about how ORIGOSafeDriver can help eliminate the scourge of cell-phone use while driving, go to [www.origosafedriver.com](http://www.origosafedriver.com)

## ABOUT ORIGO

ORIGOSafeDriver is a cell phone safety technology company and is designed with fleet safety in mind. The solution integrates with telematics and keeps drivers safe by removing the temptation to use their phones while in motion. We want to join you in your mission of helping your fleet run more efficiently and most of all, crash-free.

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