

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

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As many of you are aware, I possess a strong opinion on distracted driving, especially around the use of cell phones while driving. As April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, I challenge all of you to spread the word about driver safety and responsibility. We all face risk in our daily lives; however, driving on public roadways is one of the riskiest tasks we undertake on a regular basis.

This is a great opportunity to review any policies around college vehicle operation. It is recommended that policies include the prohibition of any cell phone use while operating college vehicles as a means of reducing distracted driving and protecting all occupants in college-owned vehicles. Another important aspect is to educate supervisors, managers, and senior leaders about the danger of calling employees when they know the employee is driving. Please keep in mind that we are heading into road work season in Wisconsin, and work zone crashes and injuries continue to increase across the state. I have included some information from the National Safety Council on distracted driving. Help spread the word, Just Drive!

Vehicle crashes are the number one cause of workplace death, and distracted driving has become a persistent danger on our roads. In fact, half of drivers feel pressure from employers to drive distracted, according to an NSC survey. While staying productive is important, distracted driving should never be considered a business necessity. Distracted driving isn't just a danger to you; it puts everyone around you at risk, including other drivers, pedestrians, road workers, and first responders. Follow these steps to avoid distractions and help keep you, your co-workers, and everyone else near our roads safe.

- Set your phone to Do Not Disturb or silence your notifications and store it in the glove box to avoid distractions.
- Schedule calls for times when you will not be driving.
- Avoid calling or texting your co-workers or clients when you know they are driving.
- Plan your workday with regular breaks when you can make calls and send texts or emails, so you aren't tempted to do so behind the wheel.
- Change your voicemail greeting to something like: "Hi, you've reached (insert name), I'm either away from my phone or I'm driving, please leave me a message."
- When necessary, let co-workers and clients know when you'll be driving and when you'll be available, so they know when to expect to hear from you.
- If you are in a vehicle with a distracted driver, whether it's a co-worker or a rideshare driver, speak up for your safety and hold each other accountable.
- If you need to check something behind the wheel, always pull over safely first - for professional drivers, this includes dispatching devices and mobile data terminals.
- Program your GPS and start your music, podcast, or audiobook while the vehicle is safely parked.

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