



Customer Focus on Loss Control

Innovative Safety and Health SolutionsSM

Cell Phones and Safety

The use of cell phones has grown at a phenomenal rate over the past several years. Cell phones permit their users to conduct business while traveling, allow families to check in with each other, and provide a measure of heretofore unheard-of safety—since help is literally a phone call away when needed, no matter where you are. But despite the positive aspects of cell phones, they have also created new safety hazards while driving a vehicle.

Using a cell phone while driving is an additional distraction just as talking on a CB radio, changing tapes or CDs, adjusting the radio, or lighting up a cigarette. Anything that takes your attention away from the full time task of driving can be *hazardous to your health*. The more tasks a driver tries to perform simultaneously, the more likely it is that one of the tasks will suffer. New drivers and the elderly are most likely to be affected by a distraction, but no one is immune.

Handling and dialing a cell phone while driving compromise safety and evidence is accumulating that phone conversations also increase the crash risk. New research by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) quantifies the added risk – drivers using phones are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. Distractions associated with phone use contribute significantly to vehicle crashes.

When you dial a car phone, you must take your eyes off the road, and at least one hand off the wheel, for several seconds to punch in the numbers, yet some people perform this function while they are driving, even when they are traveling at 50 mph in heavy bumper-to-bumper traffic. Under the same conditions—driving in fast or heavy traffic—would you feel safe if you *closed your eyes and took at least one hand off the wheel* for several seconds? Safe driving always requires your full attention and that you keep your eyes on the road, and the accurate use of *both* your hands on the steering wheel.

As a defensive driver remember these safety tips:

- Use a cell phone *only* while safely parked.
- If you plan to use a cell phone while driving, use “hands free” accessories. Be familiar with state and local laws restricting or outlawing the use of cell phones while driving.
- Use the phone’s built-in memory to dial frequently-called numbers.
- Don’t engage in emotional, stressful or frustrating calls while driving.
- When driving conditions deteriorate, stop talking on the phone, so that you can give your full attention to the task of driving safely.

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