



Kick Distracted Driving to the Curb and Promote a Safer and More Productive Workforce



Introduction

The Costs of Mobile Device-Related Accidents

The problem of distracted driving continues to worsen, fueling a growing global crisis and a public outcry for better solutions to prevent mobile device use behind the wheel. And it's particularly risky for employers whose workers drive company-owned or leased vehicles. The National Safety Council (NSC) claims that distracted driving is the leading cause of fatal crashes, and 40 percent of all workplace fatalities involved transportation incidents (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).¹

In addition to the safety risks, distracted driving also poses significant financial liability for a company. For accidents that occur at the workplace, an organization may face legal action that could result in sizable monetary losses. Beyond that, distracted driving can cause a company to fail to reach its full potential. For instance, it's been shown that even a 15 percent reduction in accidents leads to productivity gains, as well as significant overall cost reductions.

As distracted driving-related accidents continue to climb, so, too, does an employer's duty of care on many fronts. The idea that an employer may share responsibility for serious or fatal motor vehicle accidents caused by a distracted driver is not new. In certain states such as Indiana and Illinois, there are laws under which employers can be held liable after such accidents involving an employee who is on the job at the time of the crash. Whether an employee is using a company-provided phone or personal phone and driving a company-owned vehicle or personal vehicle, an employer could be held responsible. Mobile phone records can be subpoenaed to show who the driver was talking to or texting at the time of the accident.

Employees who bring mobile phones and other devices into your company vehicle create liability exposure, putting your organization at serious risk financially and legally. Distracted driving lawsuits resulting from negligence or misconduct can result in millions of dollars in fines but, aside from these stiff penalties, these incidents can cost a business its reputation. Brand damage can take months or even years to repair. Even worse, if lives are lost from distraction-related crashes, nothing can ever recover such catastrophic losses.

It's increasingly clear that today's business leaders must step up their corporate social responsibility and do more to proactively prevent distractions caused by employees using mobile technology while driving. But how can a company solve this problem? Let's explore some common options.

Distracted driving is commonly referred to as the "new DUI." But unlike impaired driving due to alcohol use, it's harder to predict and catch as officials often must rely on self-reported mobile phone use at the time of an incident. More than ever, highway regulatory authorities are aggressively trying to prevent distracted driving through increased legislation. 48 states now have laws that prohibit texting while driving, and 16 states have banned hand-held cell phone use on the road. However, the NSC asserts that even talking on a hands-free device is still considered dangerous because the driver's mind is distracted.



The Benefits and Limitations of Popular Approaches



Company Policies

Benefits

Many employers practice due diligence when it comes to protecting the safety of their workers, and they have created and adopted a written policy requiring employees to use only hands-free devices for phone calls while operating a vehicle or not to engage in texting or emailing behind the wheel. Such policies provide a document that's visible to all employees, but they need to be communicated consistently and frequently, both in person and in writing. They should also be reinforced through reminders or refresher training. Finally, employers must follow through by warning and issuing consequences to employees who repeatedly violate these rules, including job termination if necessary.

Many employees are willing to adopt a policy – that's the easy part. But ongoing training and enforcement take time and energy and some won't invest...you can buy sheet music but if you don't practice, you'll never be able to play the piano.²

Limitations

While having a safe driving policy is the first thing a company can and should do, it's naive to expect that a paper contract, reminders and even disciplinary action will keep drivers from accessing their mobile devices on the road. The reality is that even if a business drafts a written document designed to prohibit workers from using their devices while driving, that policy alone may not be enough protection to shield an employer's responsibility in a fatal crash. Rarely does this "carrot and stick" approach work by itself, because it is so difficult to uphold and to prove employee adoption. Written policies often require reinforcement from other tools, including technology.



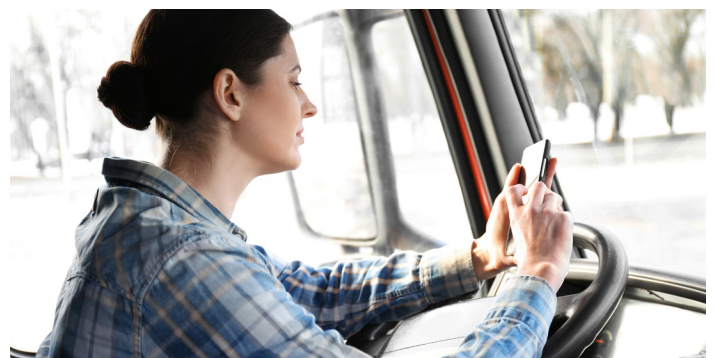
Telematics

Benefits

Telematics is a method of monitoring an asset (car, truck, heavy equipment or even ship) by using GPS and onboard diagnostics to record movements on a computerized map.³ Information from the vehicle is recorded via a small telematics device also called a "black box" and other connected hardware or sensors. The upside is that such technology can monitor location, trip distance, time, idling, fuel consumption, engine performance, seat belt usage, and even speeding, hard cornering or harsh braking to give employers a snapshot into an employee's risky driving behaviors. Companies can view and export reports to gain insight into the highest number of speeding incidents or vehicles due for maintenance, for example.

Limitations

While telematics solutions offer a glimpse into an employee's unsafe driving practices and flag concerns, it can be challenging to discern if erratic or impulsive maneuvers were due to mobile device distractions or other unrelated on-the-road incidents (such as a car in front braking suddenly to avoid hitting an animal on the road). Telematics provides important in-vehicle feedback, but only after the fact, so employee coaching is reactive versus proactive. It does nothing to prevent mobile device usage behind the wheel. Again, these data points provide only pieces of the puzzle, not the complete picture.





In-Vehicle Cameras

Benefits

Mounting a camera inside a vehicle is relatively easy and widespread, and there are many available models on the market. The advantage is that it captures a visual record of whether a driver is using a mobile device while operating the vehicle. In some states, even texting while stopped at a red light is illegal. Because cameras digitally document driving behavior, an employer can view this footage, detect device-related distractions and coach workers against it. Employees who know they are being “watched” on camera may in turn change their driving behaviors and be more diligent about device use. In-vehicle cameras also record positive driving behaviors, which benefits employees who are following company policies and practicing safe driving.

Limitations

It’s not unrealistic to expect that some drivers will find workarounds such as masking or unplugging a camera to avoid being recorded. Some even view it as an invasion of their privacy. As much as visual recordings can be useful records to companies looking for obvious signs of unwanted driving behaviors, they also create an audit trail should there be an accident. High volume of reporting and raw data can often render the data unmanageable and nearly impossible to act upon. But even more so is that cameras only document; they don’t solve or prevent mobile device use on the road. It’s like letting a friend who has been drinking drive. Is it better to let him get behind the wheel with a camera in his car or to not let him drive under the influence in the first place? The wiser choice would be to supplement camera use with a more preventative solution.



Mobile Apps

Benefits

Dozens of software apps designed to help prevent distracted driving are available on the consumer market and can be easily downloaded by employees onto their mobile iOS and Android devices from local retailers, amazon.com or app stores. Relatively low cost and even free, most apps are easy to use and work in a variety of ways. Some apps block or silence incoming calls and texts when the car is running or has reached a certain speed, others disable a phone completely and still others provide a rating system to score a driver’s trip and pinpoint moments of distracted driving.

Limitations

As plentiful as they are, many of these apps are consumer-focused and contingent on the individual worker to enable them. Employees can therefore elect to opt out or remove them from their devices at will, leaving the company with zero ability to manage such apps at an enterprise level and ensure compliance overall. Many of these apps also tend to be geared more to teenage drivers and offer less sophisticated features than a solution that is specifically designed for business or corporate use.

Bottom Line

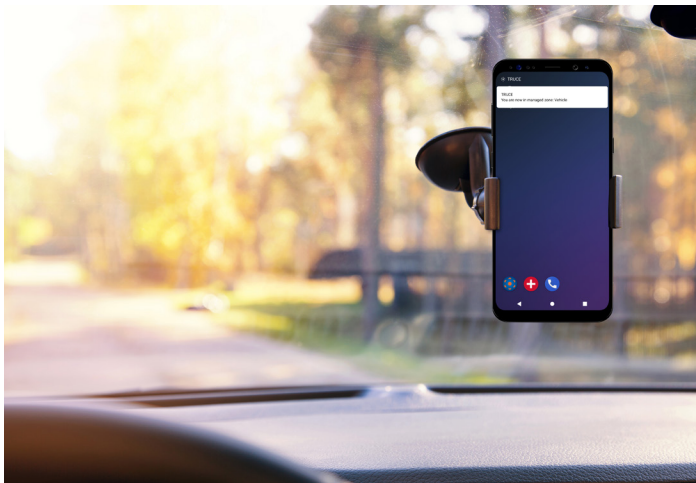
While there are many reasonable options available to detect and reduce potential for device-related distracted driving accidents, none go far enough to address the total problem. These solutions may be able to tackle specific aspects of the issue, but the real focus needs to be on prevention.

A Smarter Solution

Contextual Mobility Management

Business leaders are proactively eliminating distracted driving risks by applying a new approach to ensure drivers aren't using mobile devices while on the road. There needs to be a more effective, intuitive, and productive way of managing mobility in the workplace. Now, back to the drunk driving analogy. Driving distracted follows the same psychological pattern: when drivers get away with driving distracted, they often continue to practice this bad habit until a crash occurs or they are caught and suffer consequences.

Yet ultimately, it would be better to prevent these incidents from occurring in the first place. And there is a solution for that.



Based on a concept called “Contextual Mobility Management (CMM),” employers can define acceptable mobile device usage policies and ensure they are fully enforced. With CMM, certain apps on an employee’s personal or company-owned cell phone, tablet, or other device are served up and made available depending on his or her unique context – or situation, location and time. CMM software automatically detects whether a worker is behind the wheel of a moving vehicle and suppresses unwanted or unsafe distractions including incoming calls, texts or emails and even access to social media channels and gaming apps, allowing the driver to drive.

CMM is different from traditional mobile device management (MDM), which is primarily used to remotely configure, update, support and track multiple devices on a network. MDM is not designed to monitor or change employee behavior such as distracted driving. Overall, CMM enhances the capabilities of an MDM, providing important capabilities that MDM simply can't do alone. There have been many approaches to addressing this problem, though most have not been effective. Yet context-based functionality is remarkably impactful when it comes to solving a number of these limitations and in fact, CMM could very well turn out to be the missing component.

CMM is not about controlling end user devices, but rather enabling employees to access particular apps at the right time in the right place.

This takes the guesswork out of mobile device policy compliance. At its core, CMM is an integral way of how businesses today should be managing mobility. The software can be configured to fit the requirements of a specific workforce and company policy.

CMM complements the other popular device distraction solutions and helps companies to reinforce their written safe driving policies by:

- Using a proactive vs. reactive approach – Once the worker’s environment (such as in a car) is identified, apps and functionality on that individual’s device are temporarily enabled or disabled in real-time, not after the fact.
- Preventing opt outs and workarounds – CMM is tamper-proof so individuals are unable to disable it without IT professional support.
- Providing manageability at an enterprise level – Business leaders and authorized personnel can monitor and manage mobile device policies centrally with one uniform and consistent approach, which helps to enforce compliance across the workforce.

Conclusion

Steer Clear of Potential Risks with CMM

As the old saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. CMM eliminates the rear-view perspective by minimizing the risk of device-related accidents from the start. It can be used alone or to enhance other traditional approaches, whether paper-based safety policies, or in-vehicle technologies such as cameras or telematics, to ensure that employees aren't tempted to text, email, watch video content or check apps behind the wheel. Don't put your organization at serious financial, legal, and social responsibility/reputational risk by allowing your employees to drive distracted. Keep your employees and the general public safe. Additionally, don't let your company unnecessarily lose money and not reach its full potential financially.

About TRUCE

At TRUCE™, we believe there's a better way to leverage all a mobile device has to offer in the workplace, while still protecting what's most important – your employees, your assets and your IP. TRUCE offers the first Contextual Mobility Management solution, providing flexible, situational enforcement of your mobile device policy, allowing companies to temporarily enable or suspend mobile apps based on the work being performed, the work location or even the user or work group. Our patented technology adds a layer of contextual intelligence to traditional mobile device management approaches and operates on both iOS and Android platforms.

Sources

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To learn more, go to www.trucesoftware.com.

