

Mobile devices on worksites

Explain dangers

We all know the dangers associated with distracted driving. But what about the distractions caused by mobile devices on worksites?

Working on a busy jobsite or operating tools and heavy machinery requires your full concentration. Inattention or distraction can result in injury to yourself, injury to others, damage to property, or even death.

Operating a mobile device diverts your attention away from the task at hand or the hazards around you. If you're engaged in a phone conversation, your mind is on something other than your work or your safety. You may even find yourself removing your safety glasses, gloves, hearing protection, or hard hat in order to access your mobile device.

Remember: It's not just you. Your co-workers can also become distracted, putting you in danger.

Identify controls

To protect against the distractions caused by mobile devices on worksites, follow these safety guidelines.

- Never use your mobile device on a worksite unless authorized by your supervisor. That includes talking, texting, emailing, playing games, etc.
- Never use your mobile device while operating any tools, machinery, equipment, or vehicles or while performing activities that require your full attention.
- Don't use your mobile device while receiving work instructions or safety-related information.
- Wait until your lunch or rest break to use your mobile device for personal calls or other activities. But only use it in specially designated safe work areas, such as a site trailer or break room.

- Never operate a mobile device near flammable fumes or liquid, or when you're in a flammable environment.
- Turn off your mobile device completely when working. If your ringer goes off, it may startle you or someone in the area.
- Let your calls go straight to voicemail when you're working. You can retrieve them at a more convenient time.
- To reduce the temptation to use mobile devices on the worksite, ask workers to keep them in their vehicles or store them in a lockbox at the site trailer.
- If you have an urgent matter that requires keeping in contact with family members, bring it to the attention of your supervisor and work out a plan so that the communication can be done in a safe manner.
- If you need to access important work-related information on your mobile device, stop any work activities, inform your supervisor, and move to a safe work area.
- For supervisors, communication is part of the job. However, they should limit their mobile device use to the site trailer, site office, or other designated safe work areas away from general work activities. They should not make or take calls while directing activities on the site.

Demonstrate

If your company has a health and safety policy concerning the use of mobile devices on worksites, take the time to review it with your workers. Point out any designated safe work areas where they are allowed to use their mobile devices. Be clear on who the policy applies to (subcontractors, temporary workers, etc.) and what the consequences will be if they violate the policy.

If your company does not have a policy, have a discussion about the importance of one. You can download a sample policy on mobile devices from the **Policy and Program Templates** section on **ihsa.ca** under Company Health and Safety Rules.