



SHIFT BRIEFING



DISTRACTED DRIVING

Almost 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes happen within three seconds of some form of driver distraction, according to the report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. They estimate that driver distraction is a factor in 25% of crashes. The safe operation of your car or truck is your primary responsibility. Do not let anything – a wireless phone call, the radio/CD/tape, the kids, applying makeup, shaving, a newspaper, food and beverages – distract you from the safe operation of your vehicle. Research also found that use of cell phone while drinking could actually be as detrimental as driving with a blood alcohol level of .08.

Cell phone usage is part of the broader problem of driver distraction and is often singled out for enforcement and legislative attention. This is perhaps because the use of cell phones is more visible than other forms of distraction. Hands-free units free you from having to physically manipulate the device, but don't reduce your need to think about the conversation you are having, which is a cognitive distraction. Here are some suggestions to reduce distraction caused by cell phones:

- Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- Use a hands-free device. If you do not have hands-free ability, pull off the road to a safe area or ask a passenger to make or take a call for you, or . . .
- Allow voice mail to handle your calls and return them at your convenience.
- Suspend conversation during hazardous driving conditions.
- Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations while driving.
- Never take notes or look up numbers while driving.
- NEVER EVER text while driving

In New Jersey, motorists yakking on a hand-held cell phone or firing off text messages run the risk of getting pulled over by a cop. The State of New Jersey made driving while using a hand-held cell phone a primary offense. This means that a police officer can pull you over solely because you were talking on the phone. This also includes text messaging. A conviction (or guilty plea) to this offense will be considered as a conviction/plea for "unsafe driving". While this is a no-point violation, it carries a 250.00 surcharge meaning that this ticket can cost anywhere from \$380.00 - \$439.00 for a first offense!!

ASK: How much of the fine will be covered by the employer?

Also, you should all note that this first use of "unsafe driving" has a secondary effect. When you get a speeding ticket or some other moving violation and you go to court to try and get it reduced, the prosecutor may offer a no point reduction to the "unsafe driving" provision. However, if you previously used on a cell phone charge, your no point fine will now cost well over \$500.00. And, once you use this provision for the 2nd time, you must wait 5 years before you use it again. This means that if you burn a no point reduction on a cell phone you will be facing the likelihood of full points on all tickets you get in the 5 year waiting period.