

In the Safety Zone™

A newsletter dedicated to safety awareness

TRANSFORCE, INC.

As it relates to transportation safety, the New Year started with a major announcement regarding the use of cell phones while operating commercial vehicles. At TransForce, we view it as more positive reinforcement of driver safety rules that already exist. This month's newsletter focuses on this regulation and promoting safe driving behavior.



FEDERAL BAN ON TEXTING

On January 26, 2010, the US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced a federal ban on texting while driving for commercial truck drivers. This regulatory action, which went into effect immediately, was one of the major initiatives discussed during a Distracted Driving Summit the Department of Transportation held in September 2009. This is the latest in a series of actions taken by the Department to combat distracted driving. Under the regulation, drivers of commercial trucks and buses who text while driving may be subject to civil or criminal penalties of up to \$2,750. Secretary LaHood in his announcement further stated the ban represents an important step in safety and more steps will be taken to eliminate the threat of distracted driving.

This regulation has been applauded and supported strongly by organizations such as the National Safety Council (NSC), National Safety Highway Transportation Authority (NSHTA), American Trucking Association (ATA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). In fact, the National Safety Council was the first organization to call for a nationwide ban on cell phone use while driving just over a year ago. ATA President and CEO Bill Graves joined Secretary LaHood as the ban was announced.

As part of the US Department of Transportation press release, it was communicated that research by the FMCSA showed that drivers who send and receive text messages take their eyes off the road an equivalent of the length of a football field -end zone to end zone- without looking at the road while traveling at 55 mph!

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ATA's Bill Graves really put things in perspective when he stated that the nation's highways are the trucking industry's workplace. It is every TransForce driver's responsibility to do his or her part. Our drivers are of the safest on the road and are prohibited from cell phone use while driving. It is our expectation that our drivers obey all driver work rules and the LAW! The safety of our drivers and the traveling public is our *first* priority.

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Sources: US DOT Press Releases, 1/12/ 2010 and 1/26/10; www.dot.gov

National Safety Council; www.nsc.org

Study: Drivers Using Cell Phones Experience 'Inattention Blindness'

A 2003 study published in the National Safety Council's *Injury Insights* described new research that explained how cell phone conversations while driving have become a dangerous distraction. The study, completed by researchers David Strayer, Frank Drews and William Johnston at the University of Utah, titled "Cell Phone Use Can Lead to Inattention Blindness Behind the Wheel" showed that conversing on cell phones while driving disrupts the driver's attention to the visual environment, leading to what the authors call 'inattention blindness' or the inability to recognize objects encountered in the driver's visual field.

In a previous study reported in the August/September 2001 issue of *Injury Insights*, the same authors found that conversing on cell phones while driving can lead to a significant decrease in driving performance. The study found that driver distractions due to cell phone use can occur regardless of whether hand-held or hands-free cell phones are used. Cell phone conversations create much higher levels of driver distraction than listening to the radio or audio books. The authors suggest that banning hand-held devices, but permitting hands-free devices in motor vehicles is not likely to significantly reduce driver distractions associated with cell phone conversations. The authors suggest that even when participants are directing their gaze at objects in the driving environment, they may fail to "see" them when they are using a cell phone because attention is directed elsewhere.

The issue of driver distractions caused by cellular phones becomes increasingly important as cell phone use becomes more prevalent in American life. According to studies conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), some form of driver distraction is a contributing factor in 20 to 30 percent of all crashes. A recent NHTSA survey found that nearly 75 percent of drivers reported using their phone while driving.

TransForce drivers are not permitted to use cell phones while driving or operating vehicles and equipment.

Source: Safety BLR, January 2004

Distracted Driver Statistics

Studies show that using a cell phone while driving can have significant and sometimes fatal results.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that approximately 6,000 people died in crashes involving distracted drivers in 2008. This accounted for 16% of all traffic fatalities for that year. The US Department of Transportation reported that there were an additional 500,000 injuries involving some form of driver distraction.

A study conducted by the University of Utah indicated that cell phone use affects a driver's reactions as much as having a blood-alcohol level of 0.08-the legal threshold for driving while intoxicated. More than two-thirds of participants in a 2009 AAA survey admitted talking on a cell phone while driving.

Seat Belts: Wear Them!

We hear excuses all the time as to why people don't wear seat belts. As a TransForce driver, there are no excuses! TransForce drivers are required to wear seatbelts at all times when their vehicles are in operation. Even when you're not working, the practice of wearing a seatbelt is not only practical and sets a good example for your friends and family, in most all states, it's the law! Here are reasons that seatbelt use is a great idea:

- In an emergency, it holds you in place so that you can control your vehicle.
 - In a crash, it can prevent you from being ejected from the vehicle or even being thrown forward, significantly reducing the risk of injury.
 - Buckling your seatbelt is a reminder that accidents can to even the most careful driver.
 - SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES!!!!
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