Cell Phone Distractions Don’t End Once Your Car is Parked



We all know about the dangers of using a cell phone while driving. But if you think driving a car while talking on a cell phone is dangerous, imagine the hazards of operating a forklift, working on an assembly line or performing other safety-sensitive jobs while chatting away on a cell phone. In fact, many workplace incidents occur because workers weren’t concentrating on the task at hand.

What’s at Stake:

Cell phones aren’t the only source of distraction, but they’ve made the problem much worse, because people have become so dependent upon them. Cell phone use on a jobsite could result in a serious incident. For that matter, cell phone distractions can occur anywhere, at any time.

What Can Go Wrong:

A manager who was talking on a mobile phone walked into the path of a reversing dump truck and was run over by the vehicle. He later died in hospital. An investigation found that the truck’s reversing alarm was sounding loudly when the incident occurred. However, it appears that the victim was so focused on his cell phone conversation that he didn’t pay attention to the alarm.

How to Protect Yourself and Others:

Much has been written about the dangers of using cell phones while driving, so we won’t rehash those dangers in detail. However, the use of cell phones in industrial facilities creates two kinds of serious hazards:

- Talking or texting on a cell phone is distracting and especially dangerous when workers are operating equipment or machinery, handling hazardous substances or performing other tasks that require their complete attention. Contrary to popular belief, it’s not just the handling of the equipment or dialing/texting that makes cell phones dangerous. The very act of talking on a cell phone diverts attention, often with terrible results.
- Much like jewelry, which is often banned in industrial workplaces, cell phone devices may become entangled in machinery or interfere with the proper use of PPE. For example, a worker may not be able to wear proper hearing protection or a hardhat if he’s using a hands-free wireless earpiece for his cell phone. Or a

worker may remove his safety gloves to send a text on his cell phone.

Final Word:

No telephone call is worth your life, especially one involving the use of a cell phone while you are operating equipment or walking in a zone where forklifts and other vehicles are moving. Curb your cell phone use until you are in a safe place.