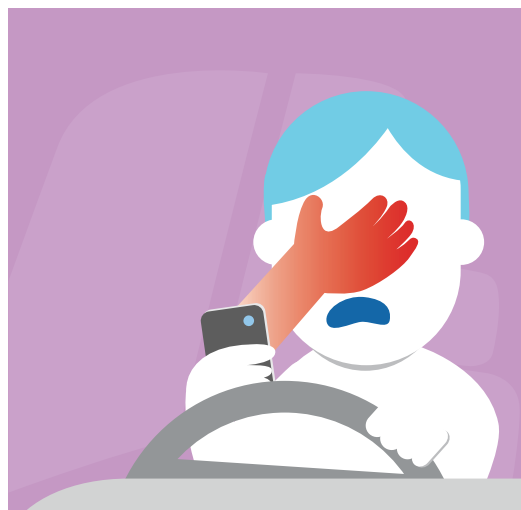


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Job Safety Includes Your Commute

At the 2016 AIChE Spring Meeting and 12th Global Congress on Process Safety, Mark Cox, senior vice president, chief manufacturing, supply chain, and engineering officer for Eastman Chemical Co., presented a keynote address, “Process Safety Leadership — It’s Personal!” Mark drew from his and Eastman’s direct experience when he said, “Safety culture is not about the numbers. It’s about getting people at all levels of the company to think about it, talk about it, and act on it, at work and at home.”



Despite these alarming statistics, why is texting and driving still an issue? Although most of us would admit we know better, common excuses are “It won’t happen to me,” “I’m a good driver,” and “It’s only for a couple of seconds.”

Safety is first and foremost when we are working at a chemical processing facility, and safety should also be first and foremost when we are operating a vehicle. There are many things that you can do to reduce the likelihood of a vehicular accident on or off the clock:

- Don’t text and drive.
- Use hands-free devices for

As chemical engineers, we deal with safety issues every day — in chemical plants, on oil and gas rigs, at fracking sites, food processing facilities, or power plants. At work, we vigilantly look for safety hazards and keep watch over processes to prevent accidents.

However, during our personal time and travel between work and home, are we just as vigilant and watchful? Are we engaging in unnecessary hazards that can increase the likelihood of accidents?

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) oversees not only job sites but trips to and from job sites. According to OSHA, texting or programming a device while driving is one of the most preventable forms of distracted driving. David Michaels, assistant secretary at OSHA, explains, “It is well recognized that texting while driving dramatically increases the risk of a motor vehicle injury or fatality.” Here are a few sobering statistics about distracted driving:

- Distracted driving crashes killed more than 3,000 people and injured 431,000 in 2014.
- Reaction time for a driver talking on a cell phone is just as delayed as for a driver who is intoxicated.
- With each additional 1 million text messages sent in the U.S., fatalities from distracted driving rose more than 75%.
- People under the age of 20 are involved in more fatal crashes due to distractions than any other age group.
- Studies show that drivers who send or receive text messages focus their attention away from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, this is equivalent to driving the length of a football field blindfolded.

calls and GPS systems.

- Make sure everyone in the vehicle wears a seatbelt.
- Pull over to take a call or get directions and then proceed to your destination.
- Turn mobile devices off before you start driving.
- Pass along this column to others to teach them about the dangers of distracted driving.

OSHA’s Distracted Driving Initiative asks employers to send a clear message to employees that texting while driving is neither required nor condoned. Michaels outlines measures employers can take to reduce the likelihood of distracted driving incidents:

- Prohibit texting while driving. Declare your employees’ vehicles text-free zones.
- Establish procedures and protocols that make it unnecessary for employees to text while driving to do their jobs.
- Set up clear procedures, times, and places for drivers’ safe use of texting and other technologies for communicating with managers, customers, and others.
- Incorporate safe communication practices into worker orientation and training.
- Eliminate incentives that encourage employees to text while driving.
- If someone reports an employee texting while driving, take action according to company policy.

To help get your distracted driving program started, OSHA offers a downloadable, customizable distracted driving policy on its website (www.osha.gov/distracted-driving/modelpolicies.html) along with other pertinent and free information.

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