

Harvesters,

Cell phone use has increased to the point that cell phone operation while driving is now considered a serious and potentially deadly distraction to safe vehicle operations. Cell phone use while operating a motor vehicle is now being addressed by state legislatures with laws written to forbid cell phone use while a vehicle is in motion. The eventual outcome of all this legislation will be no cell phone use while a vehicle is in motion or under power. Technology is being developed to help with the issue. Federal motor carrier regulations now ban texting while operating a commercial vehicle. For this reason Meadowbrook Insurance Group Star Insurance is recommending the following cell phone use policy guidelines.

Company Cell Phone Use Policy:

- Employees shall not be allowed to use or possess personal cell phones or laptop computers while in the cab of a truck or while operation any machinery. (As a means of discouraging employees from having electronic communications equipment available while operating a vehicle, the equipment can be left in the employee living quarters or collected at the beginning of each work day and returned during lunch or at the end of the same day.)
- Communications between vehicles and equipment shall be carried out using company provided mobile radios. Cell phones should not be used for this purpose. However, if a cell phone is needed for communication between company vehicles, a company cell phone should be issued with restrictions on the numbers the phone can call.
- When it is necessary for management or a designated employee to use a cell phone or radio while operating a vehicle or machine, any call or conversation requiring more than a simple yes or no response, should not continue until the vehicle is parked in a safe location along the roadside or in the field.
- Establish an emergency notification procedure so that all employees are given the cell phone number of the field supervisor/foreman as an emergency contact number. With this procedure established, employees should be instructed that anyone needing to contact them in an emergency can call the field supervisor and the message will be relayed to the employee.
- Employees found using a personal cell phone or having a personal cell phone in a company vehicle can be disciplined up to and including termination.

These guidelines should be rewritten to better fit your employee manual and have the policy ready to go when your employees arrive. The owner of the business should also sign the statement so that every employee knows the owner endorses and abides by these rules. Your policy statement should also have consequences established for violation of policy up to and including termination. Each employee should read and sign your policy statement. The signed statement should go in each employee's personnel folder.

Emphasize during the initial employee meeting that any accident caused by or involving cell phone usage while operating a vehicle can lead to the loss of your company's insurance coverage.

This guideline was developed after considerable thought and input from numerous individuals in the industry. If there are any questions or comments about the guidelines, please call me at 1-800-825-9489, ext 5022.

Henry Heflin

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