



# Workplace Distractions: The Hidden Peril



# Workplace Distractions: The Hidden Peril

## Understanding the Impact of Workplace Distractions

In every industry, workplace distractions lead to injury risk. Employees can become distracted in many ways and these distractions can compromise awareness, delay reaction times, and increase exposure to hazards. Personal concerns involving finances, childcare, or family issues can occupy an employee's attention and cause them to overlook pedestrians, vehicles, or coworkers on a jobsite. Even routine matters such as long hair that is not tied back or friendly conversations among teammates can shift attention away from tasks that require full focus.

Rushing is another significant distraction. When employees feel pressured by production demands, the likelihood of errors and injuries increases substantially. In a widely referenced National Safety Council report, sixty percent of surveyed construction workers stated that completing tasks often seemed more important than maintaining safety.

One of the most critical and well-documented distractions is the use of cell phones. Whether employees are texting, talking, using social media, or playing games, research consistently shows that mobile device usage significantly reduces awareness and slows hazard recognition. **OSHA construction regulations strictly prohibit cell phone use around cranes and derricks under 29 C F R section 1926 point 1417 subsection (d), but similar risks exist near any dangerous equipment or in any high-hazard industry.**

Distracted driving is an especially severe issue. OSHA notes that distracted driving remains the leading cause of workplace fatalities, with cell phones identified as the primary source of distraction through texting, voice calls, and other mobile applications.

## Preparing Your Workforce for Workplace Distractions That Lead to Injury Risk

A proactive approach to workplace safety is essential. Employers should consistently monitor behaviors, speak with employees about the distractions they experience, and reinforce expectations for attentiveness. Core safety practices can help reduce risks and keep employees focused.

### Employers should ensure the following:

- Employees remain alert and aware of their surroundings.
- All required personal protective equipment is consistently used including gloves, hard hats, safety glasses, protective footwear, hearing protection, respirators, coveralls, reflective vests, and full body suits when appropriate.
- Unnecessary interruptions are minimized in all operational areas.
- Company policies regarding cell phone use are clearly communicated and enforced.
- If an employee is showing signs of fatigue or difficulty concentrating, encourage the use of brief breaks. Studies show that micro breaks of five to ten minutes can increase job satisfaction, improve performance, reduce emotional exhaustion, and lower the risk of accidents caused by distraction.



# Workplace Distractions: The Hidden Peril

## The Berkley Industrial Comp Difference

At Berkley Industrial Comp, workplace safety is at the center of our mission. Our Risk Management Team provides hands-on support in the field and is only a phone call away when policyholders need guidance. This team of advisors and technicians partners with customers to build practical, effective risk management strategies tailored to the unique operations and exposures of each business. Our goal extends far beyond completing a checklist. We focus on helping employers create safer environments and protect their teams.

Policyholders have access to valuable training resources, including our Risk Management Center, Toolbox Talks, safety program guidance, and educational materials available through the portal on our website. Agents and clients can quickly obtain information designed to strengthen safety performance and reinforce a culture of protection.

By equipping customers with the tools needed to work safely and efficiently, we help them control costs while supporting the health and well being of their workforce.

## What Employers Should Do Next

Employers should regularly review all factors that may affect an employee's ability to work safely whether those distractions stem from personal concerns, environmental conditions, or technology. Managers and supervisors play a critical role in observing employee behavior, identifying emerging risks, and addressing unsafe practices quickly.

As digital devices become more common on worksites, organizations should review written policies and ensure they clearly cover appropriate and prohibited use. This includes cell phones, tablets, drones, computers, and other technologies that can both support and disrupt productivity. Failure to enforce a written policy can expose the employer to liability. For example, if an employee causes an accident while texting and driving on company time and the employer has not enforced its policies, the organization could face serious legal consequences.

If your company has concerns about workplace distractions or needs support strengthening your safety program, encourage your safety leadership team to contact your Risk Management representative. Our team is ready to help you reduce risk, protect your workforce, and build a safer future

Berkley Industrial Comp is providing this material for informational purposes only; it does not constitute legal advice or professional consulting services. Berkley Industrial Comp makes no representations or warranty regarding the accuracy or completeness of this material and expressly disclaims any liability for errors, omissions, or inaccuracies. Employers and other recipients should seek independent legal advice before making decisions based on this material.