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|  | <b>J. J. White, Inc.</b><br><b>Training Toolbox Talk</b> | Doc Type:            | TBT - Training      |
|   |  | Issue Date           | Week 18 – 4/30/2018 |
| <b>Driving Safety</b>   |  | Revision Date:       | 4/26/2018           |
|   |  | Revision No.         | 0                   |
|   |  | Next Review Date:    | 4/26/2019           |
| Preparation: V.P. HSE   | Authority: President                                     | Issuing Dept: Safety | Page: Page 1 of 1   |

## General

Motor vehicle crashes are the number 1 cause of work-related death (CDC). They accounted for more than 40,000 deaths in the United States in 2016, which is a 14% increase from 2014 – the largest increase in more than 50 years.

Driver distraction is a significant contributor to crashes, and cell phone use has played an increasingly larger role. According to NHTSA, fatalities from distracted driving grew 8.8% in 2015, outpacing the overall increase in traffic crashes. At any moment, about 7% of drivers on the road are using their cell phones (NHTSA). The actual percentage may be higher, because it is difficult to observe hands-free use.

## What are the Risks?

Three types of driver distraction are:

- Visual – eyes on the road
- Manual – hands on the wheel
- Cognitive or Mental – mind on driving

Cell phones are unique from other forms of driver distraction because they usually involve all three forms of distraction. Many people tend to focus on visual and manual distractions. However, mental distraction is very risky because people do not always recognize they are mentally distracted and this distraction lasts much longer than the other two types.

Risks of Driving While Talking on a Cell Phone:

- Four times as likely to be in crashes resulting in injury or property damage
- More likely to commit driver errors and traffic violations
- Slower reaction time than drivers impaired at the 0.08 alcohol concentration level
- Looking but failing to see up to 50% of the driving environment
- More than one-third of the brain's processing resources are drawn away from driving tasks

## A Habit Worth Breaking

The ringing of a phone or ping of a text creates irresistible urges for many people to answer the call, read the message, or respond.

To avoid these temptations:

- Start conference calls by asking if anyone is driving, and have them call back when they are in a safe location
- Turn off your cell phone or put it on silent before driving
- Pre-set your navigation system and music playlists before driving
- Schedule stops to check voicemails, emails, and texts
- Set special ring tones for important incoming calls, and pull off to a safe place to take them
- Change your voicemail greeting to tell people that you may be driving and you'll call them back when you are parked

