

## DRIVING DISTRACTED?

Driving down the road is no longer a lonely, quiet experience. With cellular phones, two-way radios, and stereos, the interior of your vehicle no longer offers a quiet place to focus on driving.

These days with everyone's life so busy, paying attention while driving can be difficult. Have you ever been driving down the road and suddenly you notice you don't remember the last three miles you traveled? Although your attention may only be diverted for a split second, the ever-changing variables of the road and other vehicles can make you instantly vulnerable to accidents.

The following rules can help you concentrate on what you should be doing...driving.

- Tie up loose ends before you leave the office.
- If you must travel in heavy traffic areas, plan your travel at times other than rush hour.
- Know the condition of the roads on which you are travelling and drive only as fast as those conditions allow.
- Wear your safety belt at all times.
- Set the radio to a station and leave it there until you stop again.
- Stay alert and drive defensively, with caution.
- Watch out for and anticipate other drivers, pedestrians or children on or near the road.
- Stay out of the other vehicle's blind spot
- Keep a safe distance from other drivers by maintaining a safety cushion around your car.

Safe drivers scan constantly for hazards, predicting how they may be affected by a hazard and pre-determining how to avoid or reduce them.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## ERGONOMIC BREAKS, REST PERIODS, AND STRETCHES

Ergonomic injury risk factors include forceful movements, repetitive motions, awkward postures, and lack of rest. Rest periods give the body time to recover from work; breaktime exercises and stretches strengthen the body. Workers should think of themselves as Industrial Athletes; athletes wouldn't participate in a sport without proper rest and warm-up, so use the same preparation on the job.

Maintaining overall health reduces your risk of injury. Get a good night's sleep to rest your body and maintain alertness. Eat healthy foods and drink fluids to boost energy and stay hydrated. Aerobic exercise and weight training increase strength and vitality. Stretching, yoga, and pilates improve flexibility and build core body strength.

Pay attention to signs of discomfort and fatigue on the job; these are warning signs from your body. As muscles tire during a work task, slouching can lead to poor posture, sloppy, uncontrolled movements, and injuries. Rest breaks mean recovery for the body. During a job task, take micro-breaks lasting 10-15 seconds every ten minutes. Take mini-breaks lasting 3-5 minutes every thirty to sixty minutes. These short breaks give the body a rest, reduce discomfort, and improve your performance.

Alternate your work activities and postures throughout the day. Rotating tasks may seem inefficient, but the rest and use of different muscle groups increases energy and maintains productivity. For example, if you are a landscaper, don't trim all of the shrubs, sweep up the trimmings, and then leaf-blow the whole area; work in sections and trim, sweep, and leaf-blow in alternating tasks. If you work at a single workstation and job task all day, move into different postures while you work: first standing, then standing with one foot resting on a stool, then sitting.

Stretches help you warm-up before work and relax during breaks; they increase flexibility and boost blood flow and oxygen to muscles. Perform stretches slowly and gently; avoid extreme postures and stop stretching if you feel pain or discomfort. Physical and Occupational Therapists are the most qualified individuals to generate a specific stretching and warm-up program.

Overall fitness and flexibility, adequate sleep, task rotation, and rest breaks can help limit the overall risk of injury.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## PREVENTING HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

When the body heats up faster than it can cool itself, mild to severe illnesses may develop. It's important to recognize the symptoms of heat-related illnesses and understand how to prevent, control and respond to their effects.

Air temperature, humidity and clothing can increase the risk of developing heat-related illnesses. So can age, sex, weight, physical fitness, nutrition, alcohol or drug use, or pre-existing diseases like diabetes. How can you prevent or control heat-related illnesses?

- Drink water - Drink small amounts of water frequently, about a cup every 15-20 minutes. (Alcohol increases the loss of body fluids.)
- Limit exposure time and/or temperature - Try to schedule hot jobs for cooler times of the day or cooler seasons of the year. Take rest breaks in cool areas. Add more workers to reduce workload or reduce the workday.
- Acclimatization - Gradually adapting to heat will reduce the severity of heat stress.
- Engineering controls - Mechanize heavy jobs or increase air movement with fans or coolers.
- Wearing loose, lightweight clothing - Clothing can affect heat buildup.
- Salt tablets should not be used - Taking salt tablets can raise blood pressure, cause stomach ulcers, and seriously affect workers with heart disease.

Someone with a mild reaction to heat may have a rash called "prickly heat" or painful muscle spasms, called heat cramps, during or after activity. A mild reaction may also include fatigue or dizziness. You may notice a change in physical or mental performance and an increase in accidents. A person with a moderate reaction or heat exhaustion, will have some or all of the following symptoms: excessive sweating, cold, moist, pale or flushed skin, thirst, extreme weakness or fatigue, headache, nausea, lack of appetite, rapid weak pulse, or giddiness and if not properly treated, the victim may collapse.

Anyone with mild or moderate symptoms should be moved to a cool, shaded place with circulating air. They should lie down and, if conscious, be given small sips of cool water at frequent intervals. If symptoms continue, a doctor should be called.

In severe cases of heat illness, a heat stroke may result. The victim's face is flushed red and their skin is hot and dry with no sweating. They develop a severe headache with deep, rapid breathing. They have a very high fever and may become delirious. They may become unconscious, have convulsions, or lapse into a coma. This condition is fatal unless emergency medical treatment is obtained. Immediately call for medical help. In the meantime, get them out of the hot environment. Loosen clothing and pour water over the entire body. Get air circulating around the body.

Recognizing the warning signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and using preventive and control measures can reduce the frequency and severity of heat illness while increasing worker productivity.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## PREVENTING STRAINS AND SPRAINS

Lifting, pushing, and overreaching are common causes of strains and sprains. Any job that requires you to sit or stand bent in an awkward position for long periods of time can cause excess stress and strain on muscles. Most strains and sprains affect the back, arms, and shoulders. However, there are some very simple things you can do to prevent or minimize body strains and sprains.

Many strains and sprains occur because of poor material handling. Workers lift things that weigh too much or they lift incorrectly. Lift correctly by bending your knees, not your back. Carry loads close to your body. Injuries can occur when workers try to pull or lift a heavy or awkward object without help or lift an object while twisting from the waist. When carrying a load, avoid bending or lifting upward unnecessarily. Keep as much of the load as you can at waist level.

Get help with heavy loads. Don't try to move or lift an object you can't handle. Instead of lifting a 75-pound load, break it down into smaller parts. If you can't break it down, get help from a mechanical device or lift it with another worker. Make sure moving equipment works properly or it will cause you to strain unnecessarily just trying to get it to work. If the wheels on a cart are not aligned, you could strain your arms, shoulders, and back trying to move it.

Change your working positions frequently. Chronic strain due to an unchanging work position can weaken your back, arms, and shoulders. Adjust working heights to prevent slumping or excessive reaching. A vicious cycle develops when chronic strain continues; muscles become less able to withstand strenuous activity and grow more prone to injury of all kinds. Stretch during the day to increase your flexibility. Take body relaxation breaks by letting your shoulders and neck muscles go limp; swivel your head or arms or flex your hands and fingers.

Take care of your whole body with exercise, proper posture, a sensible diet and adequate rest. If your muscles or ligaments have weakened over time from lack of exercise or age, you are more apt to get a strain or sprain than if you are physically fit.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## VEHICLE BACKING

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) reports the most common type of vehicle accident is a backing accident. Due to limited vision out of the back windows or around long truck beds and equipment bodies, drivers may not see other vehicles, obstacles, or even coworkers and pedestrians when they are driving their vehicles backward. Whether in a parking lot, on the road, a construction site, or an agricultural field, workers who learn the proper techniques can help prevent backing accidents.

Before you back your vehicle, do a vehicle walk around to check underneath and all around it for obstructions and other dangerous situations. Inspect the doors and tailgates for proper closing and safe and secure storage for items and materials. Insure that there is plenty of clearance around the vehicle for backing.

Some employers may use a "cone policy" that requires you to place orange safety cones at either end of the vehicle whenever you park. Walking around the vehicle to pick up the cones before you leave gives you a chance to inspect the vehicle and your surroundings. The cones also provide good visibility and a warning to other drivers that you are working nearby.

While CHP reports backing as the most common *type* of vehicle accident, speed is the most common *cause* of accidents. When you are backing, make sure that you do so slowly.

Before you move, if possible, place your arm along the seat backs and turn your head to the left and right to look directly out the sides and back of the vehicle. As the next step, or if you cannot look directly out of the vehicle, use your side and rear-view mirror to look in all directions to the rear of the vehicle. Backup cameras and sensors are good tools that can help you keep watch around your vehicle.

If your vehicle is equipped with a backup alarm and/or is required to use the alarm, make sure that it is working properly. If you do not have a backup alarm but feel that it is necessary to notify others that you are backing, you can put on your flashers and honk the horn as you back. Make sure that the area behind you is clear of obstacles, pedestrians and, other vehicles before you move. If you see pedestrians or vehicles approaching, judge their speed and distance before backing.

At times, spotters can assist you with a backing maneuver by sharing the responsibility for watching the rear of the vehicle. If possible, don't ask a spotter to exit the vehicle. If you must use a spotter outside the vehicle, make sure that you can see each other in the side-view mirror at all times. Do not proceed with backing if you lose sight of the spotter. Two-way radios and/or hand signals can be used to help communicate.

If you are acting as a spotter or work near backing vehicles, listen for the backup alarms and watch vehicle movement. Never assume that the driver sees you and knows where you are going. Do not walk alongside or ride a backing vehicle. Wear highly visible clothing if you are going to be working on foot around backing vehicles.

If you are in a hurry, you may have cause to worry. With care and caution, you can safely back your vehicle.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## WORKPLACE DISTRACTIONS

Some workplace distractions and interruptions are unavoidable but others – if not properly controlled or regulated - could lead to injuries, lost productivity, and a decrease in worker morale.

Work interruptions are a distraction that can result in work errors or accidents. Before addressing or responding to another person, workers should shut down or disengage any work tool, equipment, or processes. Job training should include instructions not to interrupt others during a critical job phase or process. Instruction manuals and procedural guidebooks should be kept on site to answer frequently asked questions and thereby eliminate the need to interrupt or distract other workers.

External noise from tools, mobile equipment, and processes can be distracting in industrial and construction work environments. In work situations where loud or constant noise is unavoidable, hearing protection devices can eliminate or decrease unwanted and distracting noise. In other work environments even not-so-loud sounds can be a distracting annoyance. Constantly ringing phones, conversations, and loud faxes, copiers, and printers can distract workers from their job tasks or -- depending on the level or duration of the noise -- can contribute to workplace stress.

Electronic devices such as cell phones, IPODS, and PDAs can be the source of serious distractions in some work environments. Check with your supervisor to find out if these electronics are allowed where you work. If these devices are approved in your workplace, as a courtesy to your co-workers, make sure you keep your cell phone on a low volume or silent when you work. To maximize work safety and performance, turn email notifications off and disable instant messaging. Don't answer the phone or emails when you're in the middle of a task – let it ring to voicemail then check messages later -- preferably on your break time.

In some work environments wearing a headset with low volume music can be relaxing to workers and help them to safely focus on their work. However, wearing headphones on a construction or industrial site can be dangerous if it prevents workers from hearing warning signals, mobile equipment backup alarms, and safety instructions. Walking around while talking on the phone or wearing a headset distracts your attention from safety and could result in a slip or fall or cause you to run into or be struck by something or someone.

Workplace distractions and interruptions are common, but training can help you remember to keep your mind on the task at hand. Speak up about repeated and/or unsafe distractions and think and take responsibility for not interrupting or distracting others.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## OFFICE SAFETY

Many workers think that the office environment is the safest workplace. But, a safe office workplace requires hazard control, good housekeeping, and safe work practices.

Arrange your office to allow clear walkways and aisles throughout the rooms and near exits. Attach tall and heavy office furniture to the wall to avoid tipovers in an earthquake. Do not store heavy items or hang pictures over your head in your office or cube. Close file cabinet drawers, file doors, and pull-out work tables when not in use. To avoid jamming your fingers or hands, make sure that cabinet and desk drawers do not open into walls or other furniture. Close drawers and doors with the flat of your hand.

Prevent falls in the office by keeping walkways and floors clear of trash, cords, cables, and other items. Clean up work areas after each project and periodically throughout the day. Clean up liquid spills immediately and mark the hazard area with a “wet floor” sign until the floor dries. Walk slowly, and be aware of your surroundings. Use handrails when going up and down stairs. Wear proper footwear at the office; a non-slip sole and a back strap are safest.

Store supplies and materials properly to maintain a safe workplace. Arrange your storage so that the heavier items are stored on lower shelves and keep lighter-weight items on upper shelves. Keep a sturdy step stool in storage areas to avoid reaching. Use good body mechanics when lifting and moving items. Request an ergonomic evaluation from your supervisor if you feel discomfort while at your desk or performing other tasks at work.

Use only approved electrical equipment in the office. Examine electric cords and plugs for breaks, tears, and frayed wires before use. Do not use extension cords as a permanent source of electrical power; install an extra electric outlet if necessary. Do not create chains of extension cords and surge protectors (“daisy-chains”) because they can overload your electrical outlets and create fire hazards.

Periodic workplace safety inspections can keep your office safe. Report hazards to your supervisor quickly and make sure that they get corrected as soon as possible. Be prepared for an emergency in your building. Know your building emergency procedures, evacuation routes, and assembly area. Know how to use a fire extinguisher and when it is safe to do so. Keep exits and aisle walkways clear to allow a quick evacuation.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.

## PERSONAL SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

Everyday activities like driving, going to work, or walking down the street include some risk to your personal safety. Many workers commute long distances or have mobile jobs and contact with the public. Either through crime or circumstance, people and events can be unpredictable. You can't avoid all risk but it isn't wise to act without taking precautions. The best approach is to assess the risks involved with an activity and take the safety measures that are required and logical.

Your best safety tools are your brain and common sense. Think how you would handle various emergency situations and create a safety plan for each one. Arrange to contact coworkers and family members after a disaster such as an earthquake. When driving, consider where you would steer if there was an oncoming car or an accident. If you are attacked, decide if you will resist and how. Preparation before an emergency can keep you calm and making the right choices.

When leaving the office, notify someone where you will be and when you will return. Plan your route and take a map. Have your keys ready and look inside your car before getting in. Keep car doors locked and windows rolled up while you are driving. Never pick up hitchhikers, and report accidents or stranded cars from a telephone instead of stopping at the scene. Park in well-lit areas and check the surroundings before getting out.

On the street, keep to the inside of the sidewalk. Try to walk facing the oncoming traffic to watch for careening cars and prevent someone from pulling you into one. If you carry a purse or bag, be prepared to let it go if it is grabbed. Don't wear headphones while walking – you won't hear someone approaching you. Self defense and safety awareness classes may help you feel more secure when you are out and about.

If you are physically assaulted, know that there is no "right" way to respond. You will need to assess your abilities and the situation, then determine your best course of action. Sometimes, resistance and a shout for help are enough to discourage an attacker. You can try to talk the attacker out of committing the crime or you can submit and try to escape later. You should know that you have the right to reasonably defend yourself with whatever is at hand – but carrying offensive weapons is against the law.

Finally, listen to your intuition and follow your instincts to safety. Don't be afraid to be impolite, and never stay in an uncomfortable situation.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.



## PERSONAL PROTECTION AGAINST WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Each year in the workplace, an estimated 1.7 million workers are injured in assaults and approximately 800 homicides occur. Workplace violence incidents include verbal assault, simple or aggravated assault, robbery, rape and homicide. Anyone can become the victim of a workplace assault, so it is important to know the risk factors.

Factors that increase the risk of workplace violence include contact with the public; the exchange of money; and guarding or delivering valuable property. Other factors include mobile workplaces (cars or trucks); working in high-crime areas, and working late night or early morning hours. Finally, workers that have contact with unstable and volatile persons in health care, social services, and criminal justice settings can be at risk.

If you are at risk for workplace violence, know and follow the safety guards in place at your worksite. Respect requirements for restricted access to the public. Ensure that visitors are screened when entering the workplace and escort them throughout the building. Physical separations like glass walls, partitions, and deep counters can provide distance between you and the public, so use them. Security measures like video cameras, two-way mirrors, and personal or desk panic alarms can help you communicate if you are in distress.

Know and follow the policies for opening and closing your place of business and handling and transporting cash and valuables. Make it a rule to work with a backup employee or enough staff coverage if you will be dealing with a potentially hostile person. Keep possible offensive weapons like sharp or heavy instruments locked away and out of the public eye.

Get training on recognizing and reporting the signs of a disturbed coworker, customer, or member of the public. You should also seek training on handling hostile customers and diffusing violent situations. Immediately report violent incidents and threats to management; often, violent threats can escalate to become violent acts.

When faced with a hostile person, respect their personal space and be aware of your body language, movements, and tone of voice. Stay calm and diffuse the situation. Try to keep a barrier like a desk between yourself and the person, but don't block yourself into a corner. If there is no barrier available, stand at an angle and 4 to 6 feet from the person; this keeps you at arms length and gives you a means to escape. Have plans should a dangerous situation arise; note exits, phones, and potential defensive weapons. Use physical force as a defense only.

---

The above evaluations and/or recommendations are for general guidance only and should not be relied upon for legal compliance purposes. They are based solely on the information provided to us and relate only to those conditions specifically discussed. We do not make any warranty, expressed or implied, that your workplace is safe or healthful or that it complies with all laws, regulations or standards.