4 tips to help prevent commercial distracted driving.



According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), about nine people die every day as a result of distracted driving. But the danger is compounded when drivers of commercial vehicles are driving distracted, as commercial vehicles are often much larger and spend more time on the road than personal vehicles.

Studies have found that driver distraction is a factor in 80% of commercial vehicle crashes, and one of the main sources of distraction is cell phone use. That's why the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) prohibits the use of cell phones while driving, including both texting and dialing. Penalties for commercial drivers and their employers can run into thousands of dollars.

Here are four tips for drivers and their employers to help prevent commercial distracted driving.

1. **Don't use your phone while driving.** Even hands-free calling takes your mind off the road and can be a dangerous distraction. Wait until you can stop at a rest area or restaurant to make a call. For employers, software and apps like LifeSaver and Truce can prevent your drivers from using their phones while they are in your company's vehicles.

2. **Don't use a dispatching device while driving.** While dispatching devices are useful for communication, navigation and log-keeping, they can be just as distracting as using a cell phone. If a message is urgent, pull over and take it while your vehicle is parked. Employers can install lockout features on the device that will prevent its use while a vehicle is moving.

3. **When you drive, just drive.** Phones aren't the only source of distracted driving. Eating, using a dispatching device, looking at things on the side of the road (billboards, for example), or changing radio stations can all distract a commercial driver's attention from the road. Set climate, GPS and radio controls before you begin driving, and when you're hungry, stop to eat at a restaurant (you'll be more refreshed afterward).

4. **Get enough sleep and time off driving.** The FMCSA sets guidelines for the number of hours commercial drivers can drive without rest. The numbers vary depending on the type of driving, but the key takeaway is this: Without adequate rest, drivers lose focus more easily and their reaction times are slower. (Follow these tips to avoid drowsy driving.) Employers can help by setting realistic deadlines and encouraging drivers to follow FMCSA guidelines.

Of course, even the most conscientious and focused commercial driver can be involved in a crash. Patriot's commercial auto insurance offers comprehensive coverage for everything from a company car to a fleet of commercial trucks.