



Employer Ban Cell Phone Policy

A Case Study

Company: Owens Corning

Number of Employees: More than 15,000 in 27 countries


Interviewee: Matt Schroder, Internal Communications and
Corporate Media Relations Leader

1. What prompted Owens Corning to implement a cell phone distracted driving policy?

Matt:

It came down to expanding our efforts to eliminate risk even further. Our company's performance in safety had reached a point where our injuries had significantly decreased, so we continued to focus our efforts toward eliminating risk before an injury happens. Broadening these efforts took us to a place where we knew every employee would be affected. Just as we would expect in our plants, when this risk was fully recognized, we decided to take action to eliminate it.

Our safety team reviewed the National Safety Council data and other widely distributed information from public sources associated with cell phone use while driving, and the risk was clear. We knew it was time for us to act. Due to the culture of safety we've been able to create in our company, a policy concerning this issue had to a part of it.



2. How did you go about implementing a policy that prohibits all cell phone use – hands-free and handheld?

Matt:

A lot happened behind the scenes to prepare for the rollout of the implementation plan. Our CEO actually went for 90 days adhering to what would become our policy for all employees – no cell phone use, handheld or hands-free. That he could do that without it affecting his productivity became a key factor in the messaging to employees during the implementation.

We used the NSC Cell Phone Policy Kit and videos from NSC as a base for our plan. Our safety team worked with our corporate communications team on how to roll it out to the organization. We treated this as we would any major change in our company and used a traditional change management model. We determined key stakeholders across the organization, identified their potential issues with our policy, and tried to address those issues in advance. We recruited some “champions” from that group of stakeholders, including our chairman’s club which is a group of our top sales leaders. These champions helped us implement the program with our sales teams, since we knew this policy would have the most impact within that group.

Then we created our campaign. We summarized the data that we had collected from the NSC and numerous studies from universities and insurance companies and made it available to all employees. Doug Pontsler (VP of EH&S and Corporate Sustainability) laid out the plan in a global town hall, and we implemented it over a 60-day period. To have the CEO get up in the town hall (after Doug) and say that he spent the last 90 days without using his cell phone while driving without it impacting his job was a very powerful statement and demonstrated to all employees that it was possible.

3. What is included in the policy and who exactly does the policy apply to?

Matt:

We have a few key words in our policy: “drivers,” “handheld or hands-free” and “company business.” Our policy covers all drivers, prohibits handheld and hands-free use and applies to any situation where an employee is conducting company business.

4. Did you have to make any procedural changes so productivity would not suffer?

Matt:

We had a discussion with the teams so they would be keenly aware of how this could impact them. Since they knew they couldn't use their phones anymore, the different teams developed their own "best practices" to assist compliance and maintain productivity within the policy.

Some of the practices include:

1. Be clear to your callers on your voice mail that you are a cell phone-free driver and not available to make calls while driving. Tell them you will return their call when you can safely do so.
2. Start all teleconferences by asking if anyone is driving. If so, request that they hang-up and call back in when they are in a safe location.
3. Proactively communicate your new commitment to those who may have expectations concerning your immediate availability, and commit to respond within a responsible time period.
4. Place the cell phone out of your reach while driving – even in the trunk, until you can avoid the temptation.
5. Do not attempt to make calls or check/send emails while stopped at a traffic light as a majority of crashes occur at intersections. We need to stay alert so we can respond to the actions of other drivers.
6. Establish regular times when callers can contact you and when you will return calls.
7. Plan "rest" periods into your trips every two to three hours to check emails and return calls.
8. Let someone else drive (when possible) so you can freely send/receive calls.
9. When driving, forward calls to central location where someone else can field your calls. That person decides if immediate attention is needed and has an "emergency hotline number" that has a distinct ringtone to alert the driver to park and return the call ASAP.
10. Conference calls are required to be set-up at least a week in advance and only allowed during "windows" of time. This allows employees who drive a lot to plan their driving route so they're available to park during these windows of time.
11. Install an application on the phone that automatically disables it when the GPS detects movement above a certain speed (i.e. 10 mph).
12. Have an open dialogue with supervisor and co-workers; this may lead to a need to re-evaluate workload to factor in the reduction in allowable time for call-backs (while driving). What is reasonable considering travel time?
13. For those with teen drivers, make a commitment with them that no one will use their cell phone while driving – hold each other accountable.
14. Turn off your cell phone while driving.



5. What obstacles did you encounter when you were implementing the policy?

Matt:

When the initial buzz around the policy wears off, it might be an obstacle. The question is how to keep it fresh. At the two-year mark, our safety team will renew the campaign. We've also made it part of our new employee presentations.

We continue to look for ways to maintain productivity within the policy. As time goes on, the policy is just a part of who we are. My impression is that our employees really liked that we were pioneers, and they were proud to be a part of it.

The global nature of the policy implementation is a challenge because of differing laws and points of view regarding cell phone use. One of our obstacles is global implementation, and the solution is to just continue to do so with the same resolve we have shown in North America.

6. Do you have any advice for other employers looking to pass ban policies?

Matt:

Go straight to the top, to the CEO, and get alignment in the organization. Do it before anyone even knows you're considering it. It's so impactful. Leader-led practices are huge. When the leaders are modeling the behavior, the results have a much greater chance of being positive. When a top leader on a phone call asks people if they are driving, or asks if they are in a safe place to participate on a call, that is how you move toward full compliance.

Use a change management process. Identify your major stakeholders and what their major issues are going to be and try to address these issues in advance. Get a small group of champions behind it. The teams that you think might have the most concerns with the policy are the ones you need to get on board as champions.