



Announcer:

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Ken Rayner:

Welcome to the IHSA Safety Podcast. I'm your host, Ken Rayner. Distracted driving is a leading cause of driving-related deaths in Ontario. Based on our growing dependence on smartphones, the data isn't going to improve unless we collectively make this a priority within our society. And to help us address this, I'm very happy to welcome back to *IHSA Safety Podcast*, our chief advocate for focusing attention on the road while operating a vehicle, IHSA's Michelle Roberts. Welcome back to the podcast, Michelle.

Michelle Roberts:

Thanks for having me.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, well I can't think of anybody else I'd rather address this issue with than you. And I believe that most of our listeners would agree, at least anecdotally, that operating a motor vehicle on any Ontario road or highway while using your smartphone increases the likelihood that you're going to be involved in a motor vehicle incident. Now, Michelle, I'm sure that there are statistics and data that support that being distracted while driving significantly increases your risk of being involved in a vehicle collision. Do we have stats that support that?

Michelle Roberts:

Yes, absolutely. According to the OPP [Ontario Provincial Police], some of the statistics that they've published, distracted driving has consistently ranked as a top cause of fatalities on Ontario roads. And unfortunately that surpassed even impaired driving in certain years. So it fluctuates year by year, maybe, which one might be the leading cause. But, really, one of the most impactful stats is that the OPP states that, on average, one Ontarian is injured in a collision caused by distracted driving every 30 minutes. So once a half hour we're having an incident related to distracted driving.

Ken Rayner:

So while we're doing this podcast, somebody in Ontario is going to be injured in a motor vehicle incident because of distracted driving.

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, likely can be, which is very sad and scary. And also, additional stats from a CTV News article the OPP just published: last month, October 14, they reported the number of fatal collisions caused by distracted driving on the roads that they patrol —obviously the highways—that it's increased more than 40 per cent compared to this time last year, and that's a significant increase. And so I wanted to break down those stats a little bit so that you can... 40 per cent is a big number, but what does that mean in terms of number of collisions? So the OPP said that they've had a total of 296 fatal collisions this year in 2024. And of those, 63 people were tragically killed as a result of inattentive driving. So distracted driving. And if you were to compare this to the stats from 2023 where there were 287 people killed in those collisions, 43 were a result of distracted driving.

And so in both cases, this is very sad because not only do we have nearly almost 300 collisions, but over 63 people have died this year alone related to distracted driving. And it's sad. And maybe you're thinking, "Well, it's not going to happen to me. I haven't seen it or I haven't been impacted by it." Well, the data from MTO, the Ministry of Transportation in Ontario, shows that drivers using their cell phone while driving are up to four times more likely to be in a collision than a driver who is just solely focusing on the road. So maybe you haven't seen it, maybe you're not aware of it, but your risk is four times higher if you're using a phone while you are driving. And the sad part is that it's a major risk factor that leading to these collisions and preventable deaths. And really we have the ability to eliminate this distraction. It's really a choice. Once we get behind the wheels, the choices that we make.

Ken Rayner:

That's a very good point. It's not a necessity. It is a choice. And you know what? Amazing that it's gone up that significantly. And for any of us that have children who are anywhere under 25 years of age, if we think that smartphones are not going to contribute to more of these issues moving forward, I think we're fooling ourselves. Smartphones these days, you try and pry one out of a kid's hand, good luck. Their lives are there. And so when they're driving, are they really going to be attentive all the time? When the chimes are going off, when things are beeping on their phones, are they really not going to turn to it to wonder what's going on in their world? It's something I think that collectively we really have to turn our attentions to. So why don't we start first Michelle with, let's get into what is the legal definition of distracted driving in Ontario? And maybe what are some of the current fines for an operator of a motor vehicle who is charged with distracted driving?

Michelle Roberts:

Sure. Okay. So let's use the Canada definition from the RCMP, first of all. So they define distracted driving as a form of impaired driving. Basically your judgment is impaired or compromised, so you're not fully focused on the road. And distracted driving qualifies as talking on the cell phone, texting, reading. So maybe you're looking at papers or a map or a printout or something, using your GPS, watching videos or movies. And unfortunately with technology these days and how big the screens are in your vehicle, it's easy enough to get distracted. But even eating, drinking, smoking, personal grooming, adjusting the radio, or playing extremely loud music, even talking to other passengers is a form of distraction. And certainly we know that, if you're driving fatigued, so you're tired, that impacts your mental and physical well-being and that can also have concern for distracted driving.

Let's talk specifically about Ontario and the rules there. Distracted driving includes the use of a handheld communication device. So a smartphone, your GPS, a digital screen. While you're operating a motor vehicle, you're not allowed to do that. The law also prohibits activities like manually programming the GPS device or adjusting your entertainment system. Those are all forms of distraction and the penalties that go with it, we've seen increase over the years and they are escalating over the time period that we've seen them. So for example, your first conviction, unfortunately, if you do get caught, the fine is up to \$1,000, with a minimum fine of \$615 if you settle that in court. And it comes with three demerit points and the potential for a three-day license suspension.

Now if you're a repeat offender, so your second conviction within a five-year window, that fine can double up to \$2,000. Again, six demerit points and seven-day driver's license suspension.

And then, on the third and subsequent convictions within five years, it can go up to \$3,000. Again, 6 demerit points, and you could lose your driver's license for 30 days.

So I think the escalation of these fines really demonstrates the seriousness of this and how enforcement is trying to make adjustments so that people aren't tempted to do it. Not only are the stats saying people are dying and there's a high rate of collisions, but even if you get caught potentially using your cell phone while you're driving and maybe, thank goodness, there wasn't a tragic incident, you're still subject to fines and penalties. And what the Ontario government did was also put stricter rules for new and young novice drivers. So they have the risk of being suspended longer and, potentially, if they are a repeat offender while they're in that learning phase, they could be suspended or removed from the graduated licensing system. So that could have long-term effects on, particularly, new and young drivers.

The other point that I think the OPP is also trying to raise is, it's one thing if you potentially get caught with a device and you get charged with distracted driving, but those charges can also escalate. They could be even escalated to careless driving. So depending on your behavior behind the wheel and careless driving has more severe, six demerit points, up to \$2,000 fine and jail time, potentially of six months, as well as a license suspension for up to two years.

And then, worse, there's careless driving causing bodily harm or death. And, again, if you're convicted of that in Ontario, six demerit points, fines up to \$50,000, potentially two years in jail, and comes with the license suspension of up to five years.

And then on top of that, from careless is dangerous driving, which is a criminal offense. Carries way heavier penalties, longer jail terms—up to 10 years depending on the severity, if it included bodily harm or death. And I think it's up to 14 years in prison if you caused a death. So it's not just the distracted driving. It can be escalated based on the behaviours you're demonstrating and the results of what might happen if there is a collision.

Ken Rayner:

Michelle, I'm really glad you brought that up. Particularly, I was focused on distracted driving, not thinking of what those additional implications could be. If you're distracted and what happens while you're operating the vehicle, there's something of greater magnitude, and the fines could move into things like careless driving or dangerous driving, which has a completely different and escalated fine and

jail time. So thanks for bringing that up. Really important. I will say when we talked about doing this podcast together, I was really focused on smartphones and phones in being used by the operator of the vehicle because that's what I see all the time. But when you just brought up that example with the RCMP definition, you talked about a whole host of other things. So maybe we should get into that a little bit too in terms of what are some of these other distractions that can negatively impact our ability to drive safely and focus our attention on the road, other than the obvious being smartphones?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and like you said, the obvious one everyone automatically goes to is the smartphones. And again, when you're using devices in your vehicle, you can't use a device that requires you to scroll or type or otherwise activate it with your hands to operate. So maybe you have your iPad sitting there, your laptop, or even your entertainment screen is a device in your vehicle. So it does include all of those electronic devices. But yeah, the definition from the RCMP and the implications go beyond a device in the vehicle. So we said eating or drinking while driving, or adjusting your in-car settings, personal grooming, reading, even interacting with other passengers, they're all forms of distractions. So really what we're thinking here is any task that diverts your attention away from driving. So you think of the tasks. While driving, you have the manual task, which is that I physically have to have my hands on the wheel. So anything like holding a phone, eating, or grooming is obviously going to take my hands off the wheel, which impacts my manual ability.

But then you've got the visual piece of it. So my eyes. My eyes should be focused on the road and where I'm going, but if I'm scanning down and looking at my device and my screen scrolling through GPS or looking at something else that might be in the vehicle, now I'm distracted visually.

And then cognitive distraction is the other form, which is really the mind on the task. So often a cognitive distraction would be like daydreaming or talking to other passengers, because it's now using that cognitive ability on top of the demands of driving. So you've got manual, visual, and cognitive distractions.

And so one thing here, why we say there's multiple distractions and there's this myth that "Hey, I'm a good driver if I can multitask." Well, really, that's not true. You're not really multitasking when you're behind the wheel. You are in fact task shifting. So you're taking your focus from one task and applying it to the other. You're not doing both well at the same time. You are actually, for that split second—maybe you went to touch a dial on your device—you're now focused on that; not where you're going and where you're driving.

So the risk behind that is it slows your ability down to react. So if you're not fully focused on the road, you've now reduced that reaction time, and that's the ability for you to go, "Oh, uh-oh, something's happening; it's changed. Now I need to slow down and apply the brake." That's your reaction. So the risk of a collision goes up four times if you're using a device. But when the driver's eyes are taken off the road even for a second and the distraction impairs your performance, like we said, it reduces your awareness and it reduces your ability to react in a timely manner to maybe prevent something. So it's really critical. I mean the message we would like to be able to say is "focus on driving". That is the most important task. Do not try to multitask while you're driving.

Ken Rayner:

I appreciate that. And I'm sure there's many drivers listening to this podcast that believe that they are not at risk if they're using a hands-free system while driving to converse over the phone or to respond to text by, "Hey Siri, send a text to this person." I will share a story, a personal story that happened to me a couple of years ago. I was at a light; at a major intersection. I was on the phone, I was hands-free, I had both hands on the wheel, my eyes were on the road, but my mind was not on the road and there was an advance green coming the other way and I was stopped at a red light. And as the traffic towards me, coming towards me advanced, I went through the intersection because in my mind, "Oh, the traffic's moving. Time to go," even though my light was red. And it was amazing because there was part of me that's going, "Oh my god, what are you doing?" And I just went through. And so, I take it, that's an example of cognitive distraction, is it not?

Michelle Roberts:

Absolutely it is. You were focusing on the conversation you were having. Yes, maybe your eyes were on the road, but cognitively you weren't in the process of understanding what was happening, the situational happenings on the road. So it is. That's a great example of cognitive distraction and that's one we hear too. How many times have you potentially hands-free taken a call, had that conversation and drove for 30 minutes, end the call and go, "Wow, I don't even remember what intersections I passed?" Or maybe you're on the highway or whatever, and you're saying, "Wow, I don't even remember that stretch of the highway." You're cognitively impaired. And that impacts our ability to make decisions. And like I said previously, our reaction time, it slows us down. So it's a concern.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, so let's talk about, maybe, distracted driving, compared to impaired driving, because I think Michelle, in fairness for, I don't want to call you part of my generation or vintage because I don't want to insult you.

Michelle Roberts:

We're close. We're close.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, we're close. Close enough. So when we were growing up, really, distracted driving wasn't something we talked about. It was, really, impaired driving. And impaired driving, drunk driving, that was seen as the biggest risk. How does distracted driving compare now in 2024 as we're ending the year of 2024 to impaired driving in terms of the number of incidents and fatalities in Ontario?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, we go back to the OPP stats. So they've reported that distracted driving has caused more fatalities than impaired driving, and that can fluctuate year over year. But that's definitely the trend they're seeing this year. And although impaired driving does remain a very significant issue, distracted driving presents a very severe risk, as it involves the same lack of focus; the same delayed reaction time. And I

think there's the social norm that it's still okay to use a device, even though, and that's as we talked about, a bit of a myth. You're still impaired because you're not focusing 100 per cent on the skill or the task of driving. So it's definitely a concern. I think it's right up there with impaired and often it's leading impaired driving in stats.

Ken Rayner:

That's a big change. So some of the things you talked about in terms of escalation: god forbid something bad were to happen and it either goes to careless driving, careless driving causing bodily harm, or dangerous driving, you're talking about up to 14 years, for causing death, in jail, including probably significant fines as well. We haven't even talked about this yet. What about insurance rates? I mean if you have a distracted driving collision or something, you get a fine, it's got to impact your insurance rates in Ontario. So does distracted driving lead to higher premiums for both, well, let's just say for individuals? And what about employers whose workers are caught with something with distracted driving? Are insurance rates going up for them?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, for sure. I mean, from a distracted driving offense, you can guess that you're probably going to—with repeat performance or poor behavior—have insurance-premium increases. And a single distracted driving conviction typically, obviously if that's involved with a collision, is going to potentially have a significant increase in insurance and then escalate through multiple infractions. So you could see anywhere—and again it's going to come down to the situation and your insurance provider—but probably a 10 to 25 per cent overall increase. Now that's for an individual driver.

Now for businesses, if the employees who you have that are driving for work—you may be using a company vehicle, or they're a commercial operator for you, and they have violations or infractions related to distracting—yes, it's going to impact your company's insurance premiums, which is obviously a cost that goes out hard on the bottom line. But also, if you have a commercial fleet and a CVOR [commercial vehicle operator's registration], then violations occur on your CVOR record and that can impact your overall safety rating. And your CVOR safety rating is like your report card that the insurance companies use to evaluate the potential risks you might have and how much they want to insure. So it definitely has impacts outside of the fines that we talked about and the penalties long-term for insurance premiums. That's a big factor to consider as well.

Ken Rayner:

So you got to wonder, if that text or that phone call that you respond to when you don't need to, how costly is that to you when something bad occurs? All right, so maybe Michelle, we can move on to talking about employers because that's certainly a big part of our discussions within these podcasts is for our membership and our members that are also employers, and they have people that drive for work. Back in, again, I'm lumping you with me on the age thing. You said it was okay to say it, so I'm saying it again. We didn't have those issues growing up. Distractions weren't as significant. We didn't have a device in our hand that could do all the things that these smartphones can do and really offer so many different distractions to us. So what recommendations would you have for an employer who has workers that are driving as part of their job responsibilities, operating a company vehicle on Ontario

roads and highways, and that employer wants to better manage and control the hazard of distracted driving? What recommendation would you have for them?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, so I mean anyone who's managing workplace hazards hopefully is applying a system to be able to assess the risk and then apply some controls. So this is no different than other forms of hazards in the workplace, but certainly going to suggest a best practice is to establish a formal distracted driving policy, and then establish best practices of how you want your employees to behave while they are driving. So some of those might include having the expectation that the devices are stored safely away, so they're not out, accessible, or within reach within the vehicle. But there's also settings that you can put on your phone and also through your technology in your vehicle, you can put on the do not disturb and it will automatically push calls or notifications to voicemail or deactivate the notification.

A thing that they can be reinforcing is planning ahead. So if they are on a route that they're unfamiliar with and they're not sure where they need to go, make sure those directions are programmed into the phone or into their device or into their GPS. So know it before they actually take off versus trying to adjust or reprogram a different address while en route.

Same with things like maybe if you're driving, you like to listen to a certain radio station or a podcast episode or something, pre-program that in so you're not constantly trying to touch your screen to make changes.

Another tip that is also a distraction, we talked about how loose things in the vehicle could be a distraction. So make sure you tidy up your vehicle, you don't have things that are going to ... If you make a hard brake, for example, that are going to roll around and then go, "Oh my goodness, what just spilled?" Or "that just fell off my seat and I have papers scattered all over the floor." That's going to become a distraction. So having a tidy vehicle will help.

Preparing your passengers and yourself. So prepare yourself, meaning when you're in the vehicle, hopefully you're prepared for the day. You don't need to start grooming or curling your hair or brushing your teeth or anything like that because you're ready to go as you are.

This one would probably be more for personal use, but if you have other passengers or even animals, make sure that they are safely secured because that quickly becomes a distraction as well.

Preset climate controls and radio. So we talked about that one. Just trying to reduce the need for you to make adjustments with your settings.

Now passengers is one that we kind of get. "What do you mean I'm not supposed to talk to the passenger?" Well, passengers can be very distracting, but you can also use your passenger to your advantage, perhaps if you're utilizing them as a co-pilot or a navigator, having them involved in a task so that they can navigate for you instead of you relying on changing your device.

We talked about eating and drinking. So simple things even about how maybe you take your jug of water with you while you're driving. So for example, I never want to drive with a water bottle that requires me to screw off the cap. So I use a water bottle that's just a squeeze bottle so I can just pick it up and squeeze versus having that extra step of having to unsecure something.

You want to be able to concentrate, you want to be able to take breaks. So plan that in and make sure that when you're scheduling your employees to drive somewhere that it is factoring that there may be traffic delays, they may need a bio break. So building that in so you're not feeling so rushed.

And, really, we want to manage the workplace hazard of distracted driving because we know distractions can be less time to react, it can impact your judgment. You can also have an overreaction and then that leads to making some mistakes. And ultimately we want to prevent the hazard because we want to prevent harm. We want to prevent harm to our workplace, to our workers, public, the other road users. So those are all very important as to why you need to manage the risks associated with distracted driving like you would any other workplace hazard that an employer has responsibilities to manage.

Ken Rayner:

Amazing, and thanks again for covering off a whole host of distractions that actually weren't a cell phone or weren't a smartphone because that's really important. Even things like pets and the likes, which you may not necessarily believe or think could be a distraction, but absolutely all of a sudden they jump in the front seat or they're poking their head through the middle of the seats or whatever and it's causing a distraction for you. So appreciate all those tips. Now maybe we go back to what I believe to be the primary focus of this podcast, although you've opened up my mind to a whole host of other things, but when you're in the car and you've got your smartphone with you, you've got your device, there must be some new technologies or apps that can help, in particular, employers who have workers that are driving, reduce distracted driving, or block texts while driving. I mean, I know you said the "do not disturb" function on the smartphone. Are there some others that you would recommend or any of them that are out there that employers should take a look at?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, and certainly these are going to vary depending on the device that your workers are using. But in general, yes, a lot of vehicles now are not only equipped with smart technology, but so is your phone. So like you said, the focus mode, which is the former "do not disturb", allows you to silence calls or texts or even pre-program in a setting that means I'm driving. I can hit that as an option on my do not disturb, that I'm driving, and it allows other people to be notified of it and it removes that kind of pressure for me to be able to have to answer a call and explain, "Hey, I'm driving."

But also features, if you have the smart technology like Apple CarPlay, again, you can disable functions in your setting so that it reduces the likelihood of being distracted. You can pre-program in messages that will go to your voicemail to let people know, "Hey, I am driving and I'll get back to you when I safely arrive." And again, these are just simple ways to activate and use the smart technology to be able to really focus on, yes, we know productivity is important and we want to stay connected, but you're communicating to others that, "Hey, I'm driving." So then hopefully they're going to adopt that as like, "Right, I understand why Ken's not answering the phone" or he said, "I'll get back to you in 15 minutes with this text that popped up. He's driving."

But also if you're someone who does like to use the hands-free mode, and again, we're trying to say that hands-free is not distraction-free, it is still a distraction, but there are shortcuts you can use with your

device if you have Apple, "Hey Siri," to talk into versus trying to push buttons to activate different features while you're driving.

And then even some of the vehicles themselves will have technology like crash detection. So if there was an event that you may experience in your vehicle, some of them have services, emergency SOS, which means you don't have to scramble to find your phone if it's not available. But it will automatically notify and send out a notification to others that you're in distress. And then that might make you able to relax a little bit to go, "Okay, there is a system in place. I don't need to have my phone sitting right beside me in my cup holder because if something does happen, my vehicle is equipped with this notification service."

So those are ways and I think what employers should do is look at the features that are available on the phone as an employer, if you are issuing that device, you have the ability to set parameters around what features you will allow or not allow and implement practices to reduce those distractions. And then likewise, if you are supplying the vehicles for them to use, again, look into what is the smart technology that exists today to reduce those distractions while your employees are driving.

Ken Rayner:

I appreciate that, Michelle. And you know what? I will admit that I use Siri when I drive from time to time and it doesn't always work. I'm not saying Apple doesn't have a good product. Could be user error, probably is user error on my part. But what I tend to do is then if it's not working, I may be tempted to reach for my phone and then at that point I'm like, "Come on, what are you doing?" So even doing that where you believe your hands-free as you've said, doesn't mean you've got your focus on the road. And that can still be a distraction irrespective of how it's supposed to allow us to do those things while driving. We're still multitasking. So completely appreciate that. All right, what about some resources, Michelle, that IHSA can provide that'll assist an employer do everything reasonable in the circumstances to address and manage the hazard of distracted driving in Ontario?

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah, so fortunately for employers, IHSA does have a lot of these resources ready for them to adopt and at low cost or no cost to many of them. So we have awareness materials that I would include like a safety talk, or the call to action, or tip sheets. If you want to implement a hands-free, no distraction policy, we have a template that can be adopted. There's two different versions of a policy template there. We also have an eLearning, I forgot about that. We have an eLearning course on preventing distracted driving. And these are all found on IHSA's Road Safety Solutions webpage. So we put it all together on a topic page, and the goal is to give you a starting point. Obviously any type of policy or procedure needs to be customized for your own workplace needs and based on your own workplace scenarios, but they're there. They cover the basics so that you know where to start.

And, in addition, we also have some audio clips through radio ads that we produced, but also YouTube videos. So I'm thinking what might be a great time right now, Ken, is if we play one of those YouTube videos that we have and we'll have our listeners listen to it. Now keeping in mind this is a video, so you would normally see the other people that are talking in it, but it'll give you a sense of some of the awareness messaging that we have about the employer responsibilities and how to educate workers on preventing distracted driving.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, well we'll turn to our always competent producer, Mark Aflalo, to get that audio clip going. Mark?

[Radio ad begins]

Speaker 1:

She was just picking up a few things for the office.

Speaker 2:

It's not like it's a job site.

Speaker 3:

It's what he does every day.

Speaker 1:

It's what she does every day.

Speaker 3:

She wasn't going far.

Speaker 1:

I know she was running late.

Speaker 2:

How could I know this was going to happen?

Speaker 4:

I don't have a crystal ball.

Speaker 5:

I can't be responsible for them.

Speaker 1:

Every minute of the day.

Speaker 5:

She had a license.

Speaker 3:

He had a license. What more do you want?

Speaker 1:

What more do you want?

Speaker 2:

How was this my fault?

Speaker 1:

I just give them the locations.

Speaker 2:

I told her to be safe out there.

Speaker 3:

This has never happened before.

Speaker 4:

I just feel sick.

Speaker 5:

She's got three kids.

Speaker 2:

He just finished school.

Speaker 1:

She just got married.

Speaker 2:

She's got a daughter.

Speaker 3:

What am I going to tell his wife?

Speaker 1:

I can't stop thinking about it.

Speaker 2:

I don't know what to do now.

Speaker 4:

I don't know what to do now.

Speaker 2:

This just shouldn't happen.

Speaker 1:

This shouldn't happen.

Speaker 2:

Shouldn't happen.

Speaker 1:

This shouldn't happen.

Speaker 3:

Motor vehicle incidents are a leading cause of worker fatalities. If you're driving for work, you're on the job.

Ken Rayner:

Michelle, thank you for sharing that. I also want to thank, if I could, WorkSafeBC, because I know many years ago you went and developed a partnership with WorkSafeBC to be able to utilize some of their really amazing resources that they have in regards to road safety. And we've made it as simple as possible for you to find these resources. If you go to the front page of ihsa.ca and you scroll down a little bit—just about the middle of the front page on the right-hand side—it says Road Safety Solutions. There's all these resources that Michelle's recommending there. So hopefully you'll see the same value that we found. So Michelle, with all your knowledge and experience in transportation and occupational health and safety, let me ask you too, if you could make one change, you could wave a magic wand and make one change in Ontario to address distracted driving, what would that be?

Michelle Roberts:

That's a good question. So I really want people to understand that driving is a very hazardous job. I think we take it for granted because we drive so much, both in our personal and our professional life. So one, I think I would like people to believe that hands-free does not equate to distraction free or risk free. You're still at risk. So if you can take it one step further and turn off your device or deactivate it completely, that would be ideal. And then from an employer's perspective, I really want them to believe that they have the ability to help prevent motor vehicle incidents when their employees are driving. So

we do have employer resources specific like we mentioned, and there is another YouTube video which kind of summarizes five simple steps an employer can take to manage the risks and prevent distracted driving. So maybe we can cue that one up to play next.

Speaker:

We all know it's dangerous to text or talk while driving. And if you run a business, you are responsible for the safety of your employees. That includes when they're driving on the job. It doesn't matter if it's a company car, truck, or even their own vehicle. So what does this all mean? It means it's your responsibility to prevent the use of smartphones and other electronic devices while your employees are driving on the job. That's right: it's your responsibility. So here are four things you can do right now that will help keep your costs down and most importantly, your people safe.

One, create a policy and safe work procedures that clearly spell out the expectations on the use of electronic devices.

Two, communicate the policy and procedures to your managers, employees, and contractors often. Let them know that they can't talk or text when driving for work.

Three, support your employees. Tell your customers that staff can't answer calls or texts while they're driving. Have your employees create an "I'm behind the wheel" voicemail message before they hit the road.

And finally, practice what you preach. Don't even think about touching an electronic device while you're driving. So there it is. It's not rocket science. Bottom line, let your employees know that when they're behind the wheel, driving is their only job.

Michelle Roberts:

Yeah. So that clip demonstrated some practical steps and, really, my magic wand is for employers to realize that they have a responsibility here to manage the risk and prevent distracted driving.

Ken Rayner:

Okay, so Michelle, the one change I think, in terms of you waving the magic wand, it almost seems to me would be that when someone gets in a vehicle, their phones are disabled. That would be the change. If our listeners were to only remember one key point from this entire podcast episode, what would that be?

Michelle Roberts:

You have a choice. I would think that's one of the key messages here is we all have a choice of what we're prepared to do while we're driving. So that choice becomes whether I turn on my notifications to silent, whether I've pre-programmed in my GPS, whether I've told my passenger, "I need you to be quiet" or "I need you to navigate." You have the choice before you get behind the wheel to be prepared and, you have the choice while you're behind the wheel to eliminate distractions. Make the right choice.

Ken Rayner:

Thanks very much, Michelle. We all have a choice while we're driving. Whether we're an employer and we have workers that are driving for us or whether we are behind the wheel ourselves, we have a choice in terms of whether we're going to focus our attention on the road or whether we're not. So I hope that from all the information that you've just shared and all the stats and data that you've shared and all the advice you've shared, that our listeners are going to make that choice to put away the phone, to avoid the distractions and focus on the road, so we can see in 2025 the number of fatalities due to distracted driving go way down in Ontario.

So Michelle, it's always a pleasure to have you on the podcast. Thank you so much for all this information. I know it's going to help. And thank you very much to the listeners for listening to another episode of the *IHSA Safety Podcast* and this episode on distracted driving. So be sure to subscribe and "like" us on your podcast channel and visit us at ihsa.ca for a wealth of health and safety resources and information.

Announcer:

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