



# More Firms Ban Smartphones at Work

**M**ORE AND more employers are banning cell phones in the workplace because they are distracting enough to be a serious safety issue for workers.

“The Digital Distraction & Workplace Safety” study, issued by Screen Education, reported that surveyed 14% of employer respondents said at least one accident had occurred at their workplace because an employee was distracted by their smartphone. These accidents had serious consequences:

- 59% caused property damage
- 50% caused injury or death

Surprisingly, 47% of respondents said they had in place cell phone restrictions, meaning that the employees were flouting the rules when they caused the accident.

Companies are wising up. General Motors has banned all employees, including its CEO, from walking around with their mobile phones while talking, texting or using other smartphone functions. That’s a smart policy. In busy workplaces, safety should be your primary concern.

## **Machinery and phones don’t mix**

OSHA bars the use of cell phones in construction regulations pertaining to cranes and derricks, but the hazard exists across any dangerous equipment.

Some workers should absolutely not have their mobile phones on and within reach, such as powered industrial truck

operators, forklift drivers and machinery users. If you have any of these among your workforce, you should strictly ban the use of mobile phones in any capacity during the use of industrial equipment.

You may consider extending the ban to include anyone on the floor of a factory or warehouse or where heavy equipment and machinery is in use.

## **Potential property damage**

Distracted cell phone usage is known to cause workers to accidentally misuse equipment or machinery, which can result in either small or serious damage to company property.

Furthermore, the cost of replacing damaged property can have a major financial impact on your organization and possibly be at your expense.

## **Reduced productivity**

Cell phone usage can have adverse effects on warehouse production levels and the individual performance of your employees.

People who are on their phones could be working instead and, if someone is involved in social media banter or watching an amusing video on YouTube, it’s easy for them to ignore important matters that come across their desks.

## **What you can do**

Create a policy that explicitly explains when and where employees may use their mobile phones while on the job. ❖

## **RULES TO CONSIDER**

Consider the following for your rules:

- Mobile phones are barred for employees when performing on-site job-related tasks.
- Answering calls, texting, checking social media or using the internet are all activities that fall under dangerous cell phone usage.
- Set parameters for when and where employees are allowed to use their phones.
- Consider restricting types of media and videos.
- Hold employees accountable to productivity levels. Note that time spent on the phone on personal matters is keeping them from focusing on their jobs.