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Why PMPs should fight deadly distracted driving

By JOHN CULOTTA

You've listened to the PSAs, seen the bumper stickers and heard the urging of lawmakers—distracted driving is dangerous. But why exactly is distracted driving such a big deal, particularly for employees who drive as part of their job?



Why distracted driving is so dangerous

Over the past year, my company has seen an increase in the number of commercial auto insurance claims related to distracted driving by pest management professionals (PMPs). That is cause for concern. In 2014 alone, auto accidents involving a distracted driver injured 431,000 people and killed 3,179 people. Plus, severe commercial auto claims are driving up insurance rates for businesses across the industry, and auto claims are the most frequent claims for pest management companies.



Distracted driving involves any activity that removes the driver's attention from the road, whether that is eating, reading maps, checking your phone or changing the radio station. However, text messaging is of pronounced concern.

According to Distraction.gov, text messaging requires the coordination of the driver's visual, manual and cognitive attention. This essentially makes him unconscious of the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, five seconds is enough time to cover the length of a football field.

What pest management leaders can do

Pest management professionals spend a lot of time on the road, and therefore distracted driving should be a major concern for managers and technicians. Not only is distracted driving dangerous, but it has legal repercussions: 46 states have laws prohibiting texting while driving.

Training is every business' front-line defense against dangerous driving behavior. New drivers should take driver safety courses, and going through refresher courses is a good practice for employees who spend a lot of time behind the wheel. Courses are now available to specifically address distracted driving, such as the [National Safety Council's Distracted Driving Online Course](#).

You can support safer driving practices with an employee distracted driving policy. Such a document, signed by the employee and employer, can specifically prohibit and outline repercussions for distracted driving. Distraction.gov provides a [sample distracted driving policy for employers](#).

You can also fight irresponsible use of technology with technology. In addition to the growing universe of after-market telematics tools available (such as GPS fleet tracking), newer model vehicles have features built into their media and navigation systems that prevent the driver from operating them while driving. There are also smartphone apps available that discourage or prevent drivers from using their phones while driving.

In other words, pest management leaders can begin to outsmart the smartphones with the help of knowledge, training and technology. Any effort to reduce distracted driving saves lives—and, at the very least, saves you the headache of expensive claims.

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