

gibca SAFETY TOOLBOX TALKS



Workplace Distractions: Cell Phone Use

Cell phones can be valuable tools in construction: blueprints, contracts, and other job site documents can now be accessed through devices, rather than on paper. They also can be, however, a distraction and hazard. Cell phones are so easy to use that we are deceived into thinking that we can perform tasks while using them.

Construction sites are full of hazards, and workers need to reduce distractions to focus on tasks at hand as well as their surroundings. Cell phone use can divert workers' attention away from simple tasks, such as walking, and hazards, such as oncoming vehicles or lifted loads overhead.

Here is a list of common technology use-related incidents on job sites:

- Walking into fixed objects
- Struck by moving vehicles or equipment
- Not hearing backup alarms
- Walking off an edge or into an open hole
- Tripping over an object
- Walking under a lifted load
- Walking into live traffic
- Walk into a crane's swing radius

Here are some common excuses used just after an incident with technology involved. None of these are valid reasons for a job site incident:

- I was only looking for a minute.
- I wanted to check an e-mail.
- I got a text.
- I wanted to check the map and traffic.
- I just wanted to see who was calling. I wasn't answering.
- I had to text back, it was important.
- I was checking the time.
- I was turning off the ringer.

If you need to use your cell phone, do your best to move away from active areas and other workers. If you receive an alert while doing a task, wait until the task is complete and you can step aside: your being distracted can become a hazard for others as well.

Your full attention on a construction site is important. Staying alert helps avoid incidents.