

## **Distracted Driving**

The Department of Energy (DOE) has taken steps to ensure that employees are free from driving distractions, as directed by Executive Order 13513, Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving. Recent guidance mandates that Federal employees shall not engage in text messaging (a) when driving Government-owned, Government-leased, or Government-rented vehicles, or when driving privately-owned vehicles while on official Government business, or (b) when using electronic equipment supplied by the Government while driving. DOE takes safe driving very seriously. So seriously in fact, that guidance has been issued to address recommended levels of discipline, from reprimand to removal, for employees who engage in text messaging while driving on official business.

Driving distractions result in drivers being delayed in their recognition of information needed to drive safely because something within or outside the vehicle draws attention away from driving. Distracted drivers experience what researchers call “inattention blindness,” similar to that of tunnel vision. Carelessness and inattention cause more accidents than anything else.

How to avoid being distracted:

- Limit interaction with passengers
- Avoid talking while driving
- Avoid taking your eyes off the road
- Keep both hands on the wheel
- Avoid driver fatigue
- Don't drive when angry or upset
- Avoid “gawking,” or slowing down to look at a crash or other activity

Federal employees should also be mindful of laws in place in other states regarding driving distractions when traveling, whether it be on Government or personal time. Please see the following link to review laws for each state regarding cell phone use while driving:

<http://www.iihs.org/laws/cellphonelaws.aspx>.