



# Minnesota Electrical Association

## Electrical Toolbox Talks

### Driving Safety

There is a degree of risk in everything we do in life. Driving is probably the single most risk-laden activity we undertake on a regular basis. Here are some tips for safe and defensive driving:

#### Distracted Driving

##### Common Driving Distractions

- Using a mobile device
- Eating and drinking
- Adjusting the radio
- Reading billboards & signs
- Shaving or fixing hair
- Using a navigation system
- Applying makeup
- Interacting with pets
- Talking

#### Cell Phone Safety

Minnesota Law as of August 1, 2019. Hands-free phone use in a vehicle.

\*Office of traffic safety—Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

#### What can I do under the new law?

The new law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single-touch activation without holding the phone. Remember, hands-free is not necessarily distraction-free.

#### What can't I do with my phone under the new law?

You may not hold your phone in your hand. Also, a driver may not use their phone at any time for video calling, video live-streaming, Snapchat, gaming, looking at video or photos stored on the phone, using non-navigation apps, reading texts and scrolling or typing on the phone.

#### Can I ever hold my phone?

Yes. Hand-held phone use is allowed to obtain emergency assistance, if there is an immediate threat to life and safety, or when in an authorized emergency vehicle while performing official duties

#### Can I use a GPS navigation device?

Yes. GPS and other systems that can only be used for navigation are exempt from the Hands-Free law. In-car screens and systems are also exempt. In both cases, most of these systems lock when the vehicle is moving

#### Does the new hands-free law address smart watches?

Drivers can use them as a conventional watch to check time, but smart watches are considered an electronic communications device under the hands-free law. That means the device has the same restrictions as a cell phone. Drivers can use a smart watch the same way they use a cell phone as long as it's by one-touch or voice activation. Drivers can't type, text or do the other things prohibited under the hands-free law

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## **Other Distracted Driving**

Turn off your radio, fans, or anything else that may further divert your attention from the surrounding area. Heighten your awareness!

In Minnesota it is against the law-as well as being very dangerous, to read or send text messages, access the internet, send email, etc. while driving. Pull off the road, or out of traffic to use your mobile devices.

## **Getting Directions**

When it comes to service work and deliveries, getting directions is part of the job. Please be responsible. Do not read maps or directions while driving. Reading and driving don't go well together! Please use good judgment on the road. If using GPS systems, be very careful when viewing the directional map. Place it where you can see the display without diverting your eyes from the road.

## **Seat Belts**

Seat belt use is mandatory for drivers and occupants of company vehicles. Unbelted drivers and occupants are much more likely to be seriously injured or killed in the event of an accident. Air bags add another element of safety during accidents, but they can't work properly if the driver isn't properly restrained.

## **Tires, Brakes, and Lights**

One of the main keys to safe driving is having a vehicle that can stop. Poor brakes and bad tires are a bad combination, especially during adverse weather conditions. If your company vehicle needs service, please take the time to ensure these maintenance items are at the top of the list. Make sure you headlights and tail lights are operational. Make sure your tail lights are "on" with the headlights. Often the headlights are on automatically, but the tail lights only come on when the headlights are switched on by the driver. Do a weekly check to see that your turn signals and brake lights work as well as your backup lights. If using a truck with back up warning signals, be sure the signal works.

## **Typical Accidents**

There are three types of auto accidents that make up over 50% of all reports from contractors in the construction industry.

- Following too closely - The distance you travel behind other vehicles makes all of the difference. You should have a minimum of two seconds between your vehicle and the car in front of you. This is true at any speed.
- Intersections can be confusing. Other drivers can make errors. Be very careful. Anticipate light changes, and yield to other drivers who have the right of way.
- Backing accidents - If possible, avoid backing service vehicles such as vans or stake trucks. If you can't avoid backing, back into your parking spot when you arrive at your destination. Things can change during the day when you're on a jobsite. Use a spotter if your view to the rear is obstructed, and make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted.

## **Fatigue**

Have you ever felt your eyelids drooping or experienced a fleeting moment of inattention behind the wheel? Believe it or not, most driver fatigue accidents occurred when drivers were behind the wheel less than two hours. This means that work and sleep schedules are involved in preventing this type of accident. Accident rates peak in the mid-afternoon when alertness dips. Tired? Pull over and take a 10-minute nap. You'll enjoy the drive much more, and you might prevent an accident. Look at it this way...24 hours without sleep corresponds to a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.1 percent, which is legally drunk!