



SD-BSP1-Distracted Driving  
Working and Electronics-080121  
Issued 080121  
Formerly SD-CELL-82010

## ***Best Safety Practices Distracted Driving, Working and Electronics***

**CTDOT Safety Directives** – CTDOT Safety Directives issued by the CTDOT Division of Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) may be revised and re-issued, as needed, in response to updated regulatory requirements and guidance. When there is a CTDOT Safety Directive (SD) on a specific subject, there may also be a Safety Training Topic(s) that may identify additional information, requirements, or guidance. Any such Safety Training Topic (STT) is incorporated by reference into its parent Safety Directive (SD).

### **Vehicle and Equipment Operation and Distracted Driving**

All CTDOT employees are required to safely operate the vehicle or piece of equipment they are driving or operating and apply good defensive driving techniques at all times. CTDOT employees are prohibited from driving state vehicles or operating state equipment if they have any physical or emotional condition or are taking any substances or medications that may interfere with their ability to safely do so.

**Distracted Driving** includes any driver behavior which limits, reduces, or interferes with the driver’s ability to concentrate, focus, or apply their full attention upon the safe operation of the vehicle or piece of equipment.

CTDOT employees are prohibited from using any electronic device or interactive electronic equipment while driving that may lead to distracted driving behaviors or unsafe driving of state vehicles or equipment. Electronic devices and distracted driver behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Making or answering cell phone calls without the use of a hands-free device. (see additional information below)
- Making or answering video calls of any kind.
- Engaging in video conference calls or meetings. (audio only mode is allowed)
- Texting or text messaging.
- Reading or writing or responding to email.
- Entering or retrieving data or information from a laptop, tablet, or similar device.
- Entering, changing, or searching for navigational information.
- The playing of videos of any kind using a video playback device, including cell phones, laptops, tablets, and permanently or manufacturer mounted driver facing display terminals, which is within the view of the driver.

**Connecticut General Statute (CGS)** - The use of any handheld or other electronic device is strictly prohibited except as authorized by the Connecticut General Statute (CGS) applicable to such activity or as allowed within this Directive. The term distracted driving does not include the use of a cell phone or other electronic devices for the limited purpose of entering a telephone number to make an outgoing call or answer an incoming call, as long as such activity is Hands-Free and is in compliance with the CGS applicable to such activity.

- In accordance with the CGS, drivers, including CTDOT drivers, may only use cellular devices such as cell phones if they are properly equipped and used in the “hands-free” mode.
- In the absence of a hands-free device, employees are to find a safe place to pull over and park the vehicle before they answer any calls or respond to any text messages no matter how brief the interaction is believed to be. The term distracted driving, does not include glancing at or listening to a navigational device that is secured in a commercially designed holder affixed to the vehicle, provided that the destination and route are programmed

into the device either before driving or while stopped in a location off the roadway where it is safe and legal to remain stationary.

- For the purpose of this policy, operating motorized vehicles while in the performance of your CTDOT duties shall include driving your personal vehicle on state business and driving/operating any state vehicle or piece of equipment at any time.
- **Exceptions:** The above policy shall not apply in those situations that require an immediate call to emergency services (911).

### **Personal Cell Phones/Texting During Working Hours**

CTDOT employees that make or respond to personal calls or text messages while on duty, with the exception of emergency calls, may be subject to disciplinary action.

- If the employee is on duty (other than on lunch or break) and the communication is of a personal nature, the call should be allowed to go to voice mail where it can be retrieved when it is safe to do so and authorized by the supervisor.
- In all cases, employees must remain attentive to their surroundings and avoid distractions of any kind while operating vehicles, equipment, performing traffic control duties or are in a hazardous work environment.

### **Safety Sensitive Duties or Tasks**

The use of electronic devices such as cell phones, MP3 players, video players or any similar devices are strictly prohibited while engaged in any work activity that is safety sensitive or while in a hazardous work environment.

- This includes the use of cell phones and similar devices for the purpose of answering calls, listening to audio recordings, music and radios through ear buds, headphones or Bluetooth devices.
- In addition, it is prohibited to use any headset, hearing protection device or similar equipment that has communication connectivity capabilities unless the equipment and communication system has been approved by OHS.

### **CDL Vehicles & Equipment Operation**

- Employees shall not use a cell phone or any other personal electronic device, even if the device has hands-free capabilities, while operating a CDL class vehicle or piece of equipment including payloaders, backhoes, tractor or zero turn mowers or similar equipment.
- If the use of such devices is required for state business, the employee must stop and secure the piece of equipment prior to making or answering a cell phone call.

### **Traffic Control and Flagging**

- Employees shall not use a cell phone or any other personal electronic device, even if the device has hands-free capabilities, while directing the actions of any vehicle, equipment, person, or operation.
- Employees shall not use a cell phone or any other personal electronic device, even if the device has hands-free capabilities, for any reason while performing traffic control tasks including deployment or retrieval of traffic control devices or while flagging.
- Traffic Control Flaggers must be relieved of their duties by another qualified employee before a call can be made or answered and the employee is to first move out of the immediate work area and away from moving equipment and vehicles.
- **Exceptions: The use of portable radios and cell phones is authorized as a part of the supervisor approved, traffic control plan and only for the specific purpose of communicating with another Traffic Control Flagger or crew member.**

## **Enforcement Action**

Failure to comply with this policy or other precautionary restrictions intended to guard against worker distraction is considered a very serious violation and shall result in a minimum of a written warning and potential loss of driving privileges for the first offense and shall result in progressive discipline for subsequent occurrences. Should the failure to comply with this policy result in personal injury to anyone or any property damage, more severe disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may result.

## **Additional References**

- DOT Employee Handbook
- Policy Statement F&A-28
- Personnel Memorandum No 96-2
- CTDOT Motor Pool Guidelines and Procedures
- DAS Fleet Operations - General Letter No. 115

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### **CTDOT Occupational Health & Safety Contacts**

James Ritter-860-883-3091-[james.ritter@ct.gov](mailto:james.ritter@ct.gov)

Anne Marie Arildsen, RN-860-841-6679-[annemarie.arildsen@ct.gov](mailto:annemarie.arildsen@ct.gov)

Steven Sartirana-860-883-0630-[steven.sartirana@ct.gov](mailto:steven.sartirana@ct.gov)

Joanna Colon Figueroa-860-306-4952-[joanna.ColonFigueroa@ct.gov](mailto:joanna.ColonFigueroa@ct.gov)

Ana Conceicao-860-594-3124-[Ana.Conceicao@ct.gov](mailto:Ana.Conceicao@ct.gov)

Michael VanNess-860-883-3092-[michael.vanness@ct.gov](mailto:michael.vanness@ct.gov)

Morgan Kennerson-860-726-8758- [Morgan.kennerson@ct.gov](mailto:Morgan.kennerson@ct.gov)

You may contact any of the OH&S staff with questions or concerns at any time. You may also send in a confidential safety concern, observation or near miss by going to: [www.ct.gov/dot/safetyconcern](http://www.ct.gov/dot/safetyconcern)