



Employer Ban Cell Phone Policy

A Case Study

Company: Cummins, Inc

Number of Employees: 48,000+

Interviewee: **Clint Wernimont**, Internal Communications
and Global Road Safety and Special Projects Leader

Cummins – headquartered in Columbus, Indiana – is a global power leader that designs, manufactures, sells and services diesel engines and related technology around the world.





1. What prompted Cummins to put a cell phone distracted driving policy in place?

Clint:

When Cummins was developing and implementing the Driver Safety program, Webster's dictionary named "distracted driving" as its word of the year. As we conducted more research into distracted driving, it became clear that any distraction was a significant risk to our employees, but cell phone use also was a risk to our business.

2. How did you go about putting a policy in place that prohibits all cell phone use? Why did you include hands-free devices?

Clint:

Cummins followed the same system of introducing a policy that we always follow: getting buy-in across the business, starting at the top, was part of the process to define and eliminate risks. When it came to making a decision about cell phones, we researched the available data – including NSC – to understand the increase in risk and liability if we allowed the use of hands-free technology. Many people were surprised to learn that the risk between hands-free and handheld cell phones were essentially the same. The issue wasn't the phone itself; rather, in the cognitive distraction created by having a conversation. Cummins is a very data-driven company; given the data in this case, the choice to include hands-free in the ban was justified.

3. What parts of the organization were involved in the process of putting the policy together?

Clint:

A proposal for a Driver Safety Policy was developed by a cross-functional team, including representatives from Health and Safety, Human Resources, Legal, and Operations. Initially, there was concern about productivity losses if employees were forced to disconnect completely while driving. Those concerns, however, could never outweigh the concern for the wellbeing of Cummins employees and the drivers and pedestrians that share the roadways with them.

4. What is included in your company policy and who exactly does the policy apply to?

Clint:

The policy focuses on those employees who drive for company business. This definition includes everyone: from professional drivers who spend a significant portion of their workday behind the wheel, to employees who may only drive once a year to participate in a community service project. If you are representing the company and behind the wheel, the policy is for you. To ensure that all drivers are aware of – and in agreement with – the policy, all employees review and sign the Cummins Safe Driver Pledge. Only after the pledge is signed are they allowed to declare themselves as a driver or non-driver. All drivers are required to complete additional training on safe driving best practices.

5. Did you have to make any procedural changes so productivity would not suffer?

Clint:

Within our distribution business there was a significant impact to the way our sales force would utilize their time. Prior to the cell phone ban, it was routine to use that time to make calls between customer visits. Our sales team shifted their work patterns to schedule calls during stops. Additionally, changes to dispatch protocols were made to prevent mobile service technicians from having to use their phones while driving.

6. Has the policy had any effect, positive or negative, on productivity or customer service?

Clint:

Cummins did not change their expectations around productivity or customer service in response to the cell phone ban. Our employees and their leaders continue to meet demands; the method is simply different now, which calls for improved organization and time management.



7. Has the policy had any effect on crash rates?

Clint:

Crash rates have declined, which we believe is a direct result of the Driver Safety program.

8. What obstacles did you encounter when you were implementing the policy?

Clint:

Among the obstacles we encountered, the largest was certainly the scale of the project. We introduced a Driver Safety program to more than 48,000 employees located in over 50 countries, translated into local languages. As we grow our business, the program will continue to grow. Driver Safety is one of the first safety trainings that all employees are asked to participate in.

9. How did your employees react to the roll out of the policy?

Clint:

The reaction to the policy was split between those who felt they would not be as productive if unable to conference while driving, and those who were relieved that conferencing and driving would no longer be acceptable or expected. The mobile telephone culture was deeply embedded in our everyday routine. Routine communication about distracted driving and other road safety best practices has increased the overall subject matter knowledge of our employees. Recognizing that driving is the most dangerous activity that most people participate in daily reinforces the idea that our full attention must be placed on that task.

10. Do you have any advice for other employers looking to pass cell phone policies?

Clint:

Start at the top. It is important that employees understand that concern for their safety extends beyond the walls of the workplace and into their everyday practices.