

Distracted Drivers a Problem in Construction Zones?

By now, most of us are very familiar with the dangers of distracted driving. Reducing the number of accidents caused by distracted drivers has been a major focus of many different state and federal agencies. Pennsylvania has banned texting while driving, but handheld cellphone use is still permitted.

As road construction season arrives, construction workers are some of the people most at risk because of distracted drivers. As motorists go through work zones, their complete attention should be on the road. Even workers themselves may be checking their phones and not be aware of potential problems.

Any distraction could cause an accident, leading to serious injuries for construction workers. While those injured in these accidents may file a workers' compensation claim, the larger concerns of accident prevention remain.

Despite the texting while driving ban within the state, the penalties are quite minor. While some laws in other states carry fines over \$500, Pennsylvania has a \$50 fine for those caught texting while driving. Higher penalties may be imposed for work zones, but it is difficult to prove that a motorist was texting while driving.

To help protect employees, several companies have developed systems to make work zones safer. Some have banned cellphone use by employees, while others have developed software that turns the phone off when employees are driving or using heavy machinery.

Expect the industry to continue to focus on methods of reducing distraction in work zones. Construction sites are already extremely dangerous places, and each accident has the potential to cause serious injuries or death. Improving safety

can only benefit both workers and motorists.

Source: Constructech, "Reducing Driver Distraction in Construction"