

# VIMS – Competent Employees Committed to Excellence

## Do you use your cell phone while you drive?

It is not uncommon to pick up a local newspaper and read about another motor vehicle traffic crash that has occurred due to the inattention of the driver because of cell phone use. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has just completed a preliminary analysis of motor vehicle traffic crashes where the contributing factor was the use of a cell phone by the vehicle's driver. Significant increases in the number of these crashes have resulted in serious injuries, even death.

### Cell phone use may dial up crashes

A new study, released in February 2004 by the New England Journal of Medicine, might have you putting some distance between yourself and the drivers busy talking on their cell phones. Researchers have discovered:

- Cell phone users are four to five times more likely to have crashes than non-users;
- Cell phone units that allow the hands to be free offer no safety advantage over hand-held units;
- The main factor in most motor vehicle collisions is driver inattentiveness. Cell phones increase this factor;
- Concentration becomes secondary when operating a cellular phone while driving.

Today, the rate of deaths and injuries attributed to cell phone distraction while driving is growing rapidly. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, **6,000 to 9,000** people are killed each year and **350,000 to 730,000** crashes occur due to cell phone use while driving. These numbers will increase along with the increased use of cell phones whilst driving.

### What can you do to reduce the risk?

Drivers should not use cellular phones while a vehicle is in motion. Call answer, voice mail or call forwarding features make it easy not to use cellular phones while driving. Calls should be made before or after embarking on a trip. During a trip, drivers should pull over and use the phone only when parked in a safe place. If a driver must use a cell phone, hands-free features such as headsets, voice activation and voice-prompted dialing minimize many physical and mental distractions.

There may be no laws banning the use of cellular phones in your Country or State, but drivers can (and have) be charged with dangerous driving if they are involved in a collision attributed to cell phone use.



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