

Safety Training for the Construction Industry

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Subscription

COMPANY NAME:

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## **Distracted Driving**

Every day, 8 people are killed in accidents involving distracted drivers, and hundreds more are injured. So, whether you're driving to the jobsite in your personal vehicle, running an errand in the company truck, or taking the family to grandma's house, you have to stay focused. Every distraction that takes your eyes away from the path ahead, other vehicles, and pedestrians, could lead to a deadly accident.

Some of the most common distractions are part of the design of the vehicle you're operating. These days, most vehicles come with touch screens to help with navigation, finding a radio station, adjusting the climate control, and interacting with your phone while you're driving. But no call, text, or playlist is worth your life. Before you start to drive, make the adjustments or the calls that you need to make. Commit to driving without distractions.

Many distractions are just bad habits. You might be so used to a distraction that you don't even realize it's a safety issue. You'd be surprised how many people don't think twice about operating a vehicle while having an intense phone conversation, texting, FaceTiming someone, or even watching videos!

Sometimes the distraction is "all in your head." Maybe you're thinking about what you need to do next, problems at home, or the groceries you need to buy. Get in the habit of noticing when your mind wanders. Bring your focus back to the task at hand. Take a deep breath. Sit up straight in the driver's seat. If you need a break, pull over, stretch your legs, and clear your mind.

An accident can happen in a second. Your attention is a limited resource. You need to focus on driving your vehicle and watching what all of the other people around you are doing. Many people are involved in accidents that aren't their fault. You need to be so aware that if another driver messes up, you can avoid their accident. Avoid distractions:

- Put your devices away. Don't use your phone or any other device while driving a vehicle or operating heavy equipment.
- Pull over or wait until your next stop to make a phone call or return a text.
- Plan ahead. Program your navigation app or GPS before you begin driving so you're not trying to do it on the road.
- Don't multitask. Don't eat, drink, or have important conversations while you drive.
- Avoid loud music or other noisy distractions. Keep the volume at a reasonable level and avoid podcasts or anything that can take your attention away from the road.
- Secure your cargo so the load won't distract you by shifting or moving while you're driving.

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Don't call, text, or message someone who's on the road.

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### **Holes and Openings**

At some point in the construction process, the building you're working in will have holes in the floors, openings in walls, and unprotected sides and edges. Creating elevator shafts and stairwells, and installing plumbing, electrical conduit, and fire protection systems requires you to make holes and openings. Whether they're big or small, anytime you work around unprotected or unquarded holes and openings, you're exposed to deadly hazards.

Falls: If you fall through a window opening in an exterior wall, or into an unguarded hole in a roof, floor, or other walking surface, you might sprain your ankle-or you could break your neck and die.

Struck-by hazards: Unguarded holes or openings can let fasteners, bricks, tools, pieces of scrap, and sawdust fly through to the other side of the wall or fall to the floor below. Whoever is working on the other side of that wall, or on the level below, will have to deal with the mess that those items create, or worse, could get hit by them.

You can work safely if you guard holes and openings properly, and wear fall protection when it's necessary:

- Stay aware of your surroundings. Report any unquarded holes or openings on the jobsite.
- When holes and openings are created, protect them right away with barriers such as covers or guardrails.
- Keep the work area around holes and openings clear to minimize tripping hazards.

- Covers must be strong enough to support at least twice the weight of the workers, materials, and equipment that might be on them. Covers have to be secured so they can't be easily moved by foot traffic or equipment vibration. Don't stand on a cover if you can help it.
- Mark all floor hole covers to warn workers and equipment operators about holes. Use the words "COVER" or "HOLE", or "HOYO" in Spanish, to mark the covers.
- Never remove a cover or guardrail, even for a few minutes, unless you're actively working on the hole or opening. If you leave the work area, replace the cover or quardrail so no one can fall into or through the hole or opening.
- Wear a personal fall arrest system when you work near an unquarded or uncovered hole or opening that's 6 feet or more above a lower level.
- When you work near a hole or opening, keep a firm footing and maintain your balance. Don't lean or reach over the edge.
- Inspect all covers and quardrails regularly to ensure that they're in good condition and are really providing the necessary protection.

#### SAFETY REMINDER

Before you use a nail gun on a wall, make sure you know what—or who—is on the other side of the wall.

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#### National Work Zone Awareness Week

Every spring, crews take to the roads to repair winter damage, and every spring, we take time to discuss the importance of work zone safety. This year, National Work Zone Awareness Week occurs from April 17th through the 21st. The theme for 2023 is: "You play a role in work zone safety. Work with us!"

Consider the dangers you face when you drive through or work in a work zone. In work zones in 2020:

- Over 44,000 people were injured in crashes.
- 857 people were killed in 774 fatal crashes.
- 117 people were killed while working in work zones.
- Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, California, and Tennessee top the list as the most dangerous states for work zone accidents.

As a construction worker, you understand what happens on both sides of the work zone barrier. You can use your unique perspective and your knowledge to make work zones safer for drivers and workers.

**Make work zones safer by planning your trip.** Check traffic conditions on the route you plan to take. Plan your route to avoid busy work zones. Set up your navigation app or GPS <u>before</u> you start driving.

**Distracted driving causes work zone fatalities—pay attention.** Too many of us think of our vehicles as our living rooms. We make calls, send texts, eat, and drink. And we don't pay attention to the road. Distracted driving was

involved in 1 out of every 8 fatal work zone crashes. When you're distracted, you could miss work zone signs or a flagger. You prevent accidents by paying attention. Put your phone away. Anticipate changing traffic patterns. Keep an eye out for workers on the road. Follow work zone speed limits. Be prepared to stop suddenly. Increase the distance between you and the vehicle in front of you so you'll have more time to react and avoid an accident.

When you work in a work zone, you're surrounded by fast-moving cars and heavy construction equipment. You have to stay alert at all times.

- Keep a safe distance from moving equipment.
- Wear high-visibility clothing so drivers and heavy equipment operators can see you easily.
- Never work or stand in an active traffic lane.
- Always work with a physical barrier between you and drivers on the road. A good barrier can mean the difference between life and death.
- Check work zone signs frequently to make sure they're easy for drivers to see and read.
- Make sure barriers are positioned well. Report evidence of near misses, such as damaged barricades or tire marks.

#### SAFETY REMINDER

"Distracted working" can kill you as fast as distracted driving. Put your phone away and focus on your work.

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### **Demolition Hazards**

Demolition work is a big part of the construction industry. Some demolitions are small and contained, like breaking through a wall that separates a kitchen from a dining room. Others include dismantling, destroying, and removing an entire building. Big or small, demolitions can expose you to many hazards. Unstable structures can crush you, hazardous dust can poison you, debris can strike you, and the noise of jackhammers and explosives can deafen you. Stay focused around all demolition work so you can go home in one piece at the end of the day.

**Be aware of structural instability.** Before you start any demolition work, a competent person should carry out an engineering survey. The survey determines the general condition of framing, floors, and walls. You can use this information to prevent a premature collapse. You may need to shore up a rotten floor or brace the walls of a damaged building. When you prevent a collapse, you prevent property damage and serious injuries. And if it's "just" a kitchen wall you're knocking down, you still need to know if there's plumbing, wiring, or ducts in that wall.

**Breathe easy.** Hazardous materials can hide behind walls, under floors, and in ceiling tiles. Respiratory protection is especially important on a demolition site. Breaking down buildings can expose you to hazardous dust containing: silica or asbestos, heavy metals like lead, and even biohazards such as hantavirus. A simple dust mask may not offer enough protection. You might need to wear a full respirator and protective clothing.

**Watch out for debris.** Demolition generates lots of debris. Large pieces of concrete, wood, or rebar can cut you, fall onto you, trip you, or hit you and cause an injury. Always stay alert to your surroundings. Be sure to remove and dispose of debris properly. Always wear your hard hat, eye protection, and gloves on the demolition site.

**Don't ignore the noise.** Demolition work can produce high levels of noise, which exposes you to hearing loss and other problems like tinnitus and elevated blood pressure. You'll need to protect yourself from noise created by excavators, jackhammers, and sometimes even explosives. Wear hearing protection such as earplugs or earmuffs.

**Use designated safe areas for eating, taking breaks, and using the restroom.** Don't eat or drink on the demolition site. You could ingest airborne dust containing hazardous materials. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before eating, drinking, or smoking. Dispose of cigarette butts in safe receptacles.

**Be ready for emergencies.** Know where fire extinguishers and first-aid kits are located. Always have a clear exit route in case of a fire. Demolition sites change from moment to moment—stay aware of the changes.

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Under no circumstances should you slide down a material chute for fun or to exit the building.

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