

Phones and Distraction

About 7 minutes to deliver

Not a lecture about phones — a talk about the fact that attention is one thing and a site takes all of it.

You have one attention and it does not divide. What feels like doing two things is switching quickly between them, and every switch has a gap in it.

That is not a character flaw. It is how everybody's brain works, and it is why this is worth a talk rather than a rule.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON A SITE

- You look straight at things you do not see. A person on the phone will look directly at a moving forklift, a hole, or a hand signal and register none of it. It is well documented and it feels like nothing at all from the inside.
- The reversing truck, the shout, the alarm. Sound is how a site warns you, and headphones take that away entirely.
- The step you have taken a thousand times. Most falls on the level happen to people whose attention was somewhere else, on ground they know perfectly.
- The step you were in the middle of. Interrupt somebody mid-sequence and they resume one step further on than they stopped. That is how a valve stays open and a lock does not go on.

WHAT WE DO HERE

- Phone away while you are moving through the site, and while you are operating anything.
- Step out of the work area to take a call. Somewhere you can see, off to the side, out of a travel path. Two minutes.
- No phone at height, in a basket, on a ladder, in a trench, or as a spotter.
- No headphones or earbuds on the working area. If hearing protection is needed, it is hearing protection — and radio muffs are only acceptable where they do not mask the alarms and the shouts. Both ears blocked with music is not compatible with a live site.
- Driving: it is set up before you move, or it waits. 49 CFR 392.80 bans texting outright for commercial drivers and it is banned here for everyone in a company vehicle.
- Nobody here needs you to answer immediately. If you feel like you have to, tell me — that is something I fix, not something you manage.

INTERRUPTING OTHER PEOPLE

This is the half nobody thinks about.

- Do not start a conversation with somebody mid-task on a machine, at height, or in the middle of a sequence. Wait until they look up.
- If you do have to interrupt, say so and let them stop properly rather than talking at their back.
- When you come back from an interruption, go back one step, not straight on from where you think you were.

AND THE HONEST PART

Phones are not the enemy — they are cameras, manuals, drawings, and how everybody's family reaches them. The point is not that they are bad. The point is that a site takes all of your attention, and anything with a screen is very good at taking some of it without asking.

ASK THE CREW

- Where on this site is it genuinely fine to take a call?
- Is anyone wearing earbuds around moving equipment?
- Has anyone nearly walked into something while looking at a phone here?

29 CFR 1926.21 · 49 CFR 392.80

This is a toolbox talk, not a course. It is general awareness on one topic — not site-specific, not a hazard assessment, and not a substitute for assessment of your workplace by a competent person, your written programs, or manufacturers' instructions. It does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. Regulations change; verify against the current standard. Whoever delivers it is responsible for deciding it is suitable and sufficient for the work. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, not a substitute for professional medical care or certified emergency-response training, and it confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. Migna Safety Solutions · training.mignasafety.com

v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/phones-and-distraction>

ATTENDANCE RECORD

Phones and Distraction

About 7 minutes to deliver · 29 CFR 1926.21 · 49 CFR 392.80

Date

Job / site

Delivered by

Company

#	Print name	Signature	Date
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			

I delivered this talk and determined it was suitable for this crew and this work.

Form supplied by Migna Safety Solutions · v2026-09-08 · <https://training.mignasafety.com/toolbox-talks/phones-and-distraction>

Keep this sheet with your training records. This form is supplied blank by Migna Safety Solutions — we did not deliver this session, were not present, and make no representation about what was said or who attended. A toolbox talk is general awareness on one topic and does not by itself satisfy any OSHA training requirement. The employer remains responsible for site-specific hazard assessment and for the training its workers are required to have. Where a talk covers first aid, resuscitation, or mental health it is general safety information, not medical advice, and confers no certification — in an emergency, call 911. Free to print and use, as is, with no warranty of any kind. training.mignasafety.com