**Five Minutes for Safety**

**Do It For Me**

**Objective:** To help employees understand that unsafe driving habits like excessive speed and distractions not only put their lives at risk, they can irreparably harm the lives of loved ones forever.

**Opening**

You don’t need me to tell you that excessive speed and distractions have become greater dangers than ever on roadways in Minnesota and across the country. All you need to do is:

* *Get behind the wheel and observe other drivers zooming past you, often at speeds far exceeding the speed limit. You’re not imagining it.*
  + *In a three-day period in early July 2023, a Minnesota State Patrol officer caught multiple drivers zooming by at more than 100 miles per hour in the same stretch of interstate, one doing 109 mph in a 60 mph zone.*
  + *In 2022, the Minnesota State Patrol alone wrote more than 1,100 citations for speeds over​ 100 .*
  + *Despite a four-year-old law mandating hands-free only use of cell phones, too many drivers are still distracted by calls, texts and more, not to mention a laundry list of other distractions.*
* *Check the news. Each day there are new reports of horrific crashes with fatalities and catastrophic injuries, a significant number due to excessive speed and distracted driving.*
  + *In 2022, 129 motorists died in speed-related crashes in Minnesota, that is almost one-third of the 144 fatalities.*
  + *More than 32,000 crashes were distracted driving-related from 2018-2022, contributing to one in 11 crashes in Minnesota.*
* *Ask yourself – (you may ask for raised hands or allow people to keep answers to themselves)*
  + *Have you looked down at the speedometer and found yourself well over the legal limit?*
  + *Do you view your vehicle’s driver’s seat as the perfect spot from which to conduct all facets of your life – business, meals, personal grooming and more?*
  + *How could your risky driving behavior irreparably harm those you love?*

**Questions for leading the conversation**

* Has anyone in your vehicle ever asked you to slow down? Or to put down your cellphone?
* Do you ever think about your passengers and their safety?
* How would you feel if you were behind the wheel and a loved one died or was critically injured as a result of your excessive speed, distraction or other risky behavior?
* Have you ever been afraid to be a passenger when someone in your family was driving?
* Have you ever spoken up about a driver’s risky behavior?
* Think of three people you love. How would their lives change if you were killed or severely injured in a crash? How would your life change?
* Has anyone ever begged to change your driving habits and said “Do it for me”?

At some point in our lives, we’ve all had the uneasy feeling of being a passenger and just not being comfortable with how the person behind the wheel is driving or conducting themselves. Maybe the driver has had too much to drink, or they’re going too fast, or they’re distracted, talking on the cell phone and not paying attention to the road.

Or perhaps we’ve seen friends or family head to the car to go somewhere and you know deep inside that they’re really in no shape to drive safely, or that they have a habit of speeding, or that they constantly use their phone while driving.

It can be hard sometimes to speak up, to know when and how to intervene. It takes courage and guts, especially in a social setting when others are watching, and you don’t know how the person you might be confronting is going to react.

Thousands of people know this pain as the friends and family of loved ones who died as passengers in completely preventable crashes. In the tragic aftermath, stories emerge of friends and parents being concerned but not taking action: “I tried to stop him, but he wouldn’t listen. I didn’t know what could happen. If only I had said something when she took that call…”

Passengers can dramatically reduce texting while driving by asking the driver to stop, according to a survey commissioned by Erie Insurance. Nearly half of drivers who were asked or told to stop texting (43%) said they stopped doing it immediately and never did it again. Yet 10% of passengers don’t speak up when a driver starts texting because they wouldn’t want to offend the driver or feel uncomfortable doing so.

**Company/organization policy review, if applicable.**

**Closing reinforcement**

Here’s an idea to remind yourself of what’s really important every time you drive. Find a favorite photo of your loved ones and tape it to your dashboard – out of the line of driving vision, of course. Think about those questions we answered earlier. If they aren’t riding with you, think of what they’d say about risky behavior. “Slow down. Pay attention. Do it for me.”

**Sources:** Minnesota Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

Minnesota Department of Public Safety – Office of Traffic Safety