

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ALLIANCE



INDUSTRY ALERT – June 8, 2009

Cell Phones and Personal Entertainment Devices in the Workplace

The *Parks and Open Space Alliance* (POSA) continually monitors issues and legislative changes that may impact green space operations and industry best practices. These alerts are offered jointly to the members of OPA, STA and ORFA in hopes of collectively improving worker and community safety through awareness and compliance.

- 1) As part of its ongoing commitment to Health and Safety issues, POSA encourages all members to consider the implementation of a policy regarding use of electronic communication and personal entertainment devices as part of their internal safe driver and equipment operator training initiatives.**

In September of 2008 the Ontario Medical Association released a report indicating “that cell phone use (regardless of whether it is hands-free or hand-held) has a significant impact on the driver's cognitive functions, visual concentration, the speed at which they can process information and, as a result, their reaction time.”

Employees operating any kind of machinery while using telephones, text communication or entertainment devices would suffer from similarly reduced abilities and as a result could potentially face an increased exposure to hazard and risk of injury through error or distraction.

As an example, the Town of Blue Mountain has now endorsed a proposal to restrict the use of Personal Audio Equipment which requires the use of head/earphones such as personal CD/MP3 players in certain work areas. POSA strongly suggests that all members consider endorsement of a similar policy in their respective Health and Safety programs as a measure to help protect all employees, employers, workers and clients alike.

- 2) On April 22, 2009 the Ontario Government passed the following amendment to the Highway Traffic Act:**

Section: 78.1 (1) No person shall drive a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using a hand-held wireless communication device or other prescribed device that is capable of receiving or transmitting telephone communications, electronic data, mail or text messages.

(2) No person shall drive a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using a hand-held electronic entertainment device or other prescribed device the primary use of which is unrelated to the safe operation of the motor vehicle.

A reminder to all that breaches of this new regulation may result in personal driving penalties and/or fines that will be the responsibility of the worker and may impact vehicle operator insurance premiums.

Information Links:

Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=en&BillID=2099&detailPage=bills_detail_the_bill

Occupational Health and Safety Act: [http://www.e-](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm#BK21)

[laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm#BK21](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm#BK21)

Canada Safety Council: <http://www.safety-council.org/info/traffic/cellular.html>

Ontario Medical Association: <http://www.oma.org/media/news/pr080914.asp>

The Parks and Open Space Alliance (POSA) is a coalition of the Ontario Parks Association, the Ontario Recreation Facilities Association and the Sports Turf Association dedicated to strengthening parks and open space practitioners through professional development, recognition and advocacy. For more information, please visit:

- Ontario Parks Association www.ontarioparksassociation.ca
- Ontario Recreation Facilities Association www.orfa.com
- Sports Turf Association www.sportsturfassociation.com