CITY OF HAMILTON - CORPORATE SAFETY GUIDELINE

DEVELOPED BY: HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLNESS SECTION  Procedure # COH-RQ-GD-31

DATE: 2010-09-22  APPROVED BY: Senior Management Team

SAFE USE OF MOBILE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

I. GENERAL OVERVIEW:

The purpose of this guideline is to provide for safe, appropriate and consistent use of mobile communication technology by City staff while operating city vehicles/equipment and when operating their own personal vehicles during the course of their employment.

The City of Hamilton recognizes the value of cellular telephones and other mobile communication technology such as the “BlackBerry” to employees working off site. However, unsafe use of such technology while operating a vehicle or equipment can pose serious dangers to the public and to employee safety.

Ontario law bans the use of hand-held cell phones and other devices while driving (Highway Traffic Act). The ban also applies to texting and checking, sending or replying to email. Hands-free cell phone use is allowed. The use of hand-held two-way radios is also allowed but the law has a three year phase-out period (until January 1, 2013) for commercial vehicles on the use of hand-held two-way radios, to allow for hands-free technologies to be developed. This guideline will be reviewed and updated at that time.

The City is committed to providing ongoing health and safety information and guidelines on mobile communication technology to employees, to prevent avoidable illness or injury.

II. SCOPE AND GUIDELINES:

This guideline applies to all City of Hamilton employees who use mobile communication technology such as BlackBerries, cellular telephones, two-way radios and hand microphone or portable radios as part of their job duties.

This guideline does not apply to:

- Fire, Police and EMS in the course of their employment.

- other employees when a vehicle is off the traveled part of the roadway in a safe location and parked so that the vehicle or equipment is not impeding traffic.
• any employee when contacting the Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services in an emergency situation – calling 9-1-1.

DEFINITIONS:

Cellular telephone: a mobile telephone system

BlackBerry: trade name for advanced telecommunication system provided by the City of Hamilton

Hand microphone or portable radio: means a wireless communication device, consisting of a hand-held unit that is both receiver and microphone, that is operated by a push-to-talk function on a set frequency and that allows for voice communication but not for the transmission and receipt of voice communication at the same time.

Mobile data terminal: means a computerized device that is used exclusively to communicate with a dispatcher or control centre.

Two-way radio: means a wireless communication device, consisting of a main receiver unit and a separate hand-held microphone, that is operated by a push–to-talk function on a set frequency and that allows for voice communication but not for the transmission and receipt of voice communication at the same time.

PROCEDURES:

Managers and Supervisors:

To ensure the safe use of mobile communication technology, Department Managers and Supervisors should,

• Identify employees/positions required to use mobile communication equipment as part of their job duties
• Ensure equipment is installed correctly - ergonomically and mechanically.
• Ensure equipment/devices such as, cell phones, GPS units and portable radios, are secured to prevent movement and potential injuries to the driver and/or passengers in the vehicle or equipment.
• Provide mobile communication technology equipment and accessories that meet current City of Hamilton standards by consulting Corporate Services’ Information Services and Purchasing divisions.
• Review these guidelines and provide information on mobile communication technology safety to all users of mobile communications technologies.
• Provide information and training on the proper use and recommended safety practices for the mobile communication technology as outlined in the owner’s manual for the technology provided.
Workers:
The use of mobile communication technology can be a distraction that takes a driver away from the primary task of operating a vehicle. Workers should,

- Follow these guidelines and all applicable highway traffic laws including those related to the safe use of mobile communication technology.
- Eliminate or control all distractions that could impact the task of driving.
- Let the voicemail message or message system answer (when applicable) incoming calls while driving, whenever possible and respond to the message when it is safe to do so.
- Have another person (passenger) in the vehicle answer the call, when possible.
- Only answer a call if absolutely necessary. Keep the conversation brief as possible and alert callers that you are on the road.
- Never attempt to dial a number while operating a vehicle or equipment unless the device you are using is equipped with voice activated dialing.
- Never send or read text messages or check, respond to or send email while driving a vehicle.
- Never program a GPS while driving
- Not engage in a stressful or emotional conversation while operating a vehicle or mobile equipment.
- Adjust cell phone use according to traffic conditions.
- Immediately report all equipment concerns to their supervisor.
- Not operate hand-held cell phones while operating a vehicle or equipment in the course of employment, except to contact Police, Fire and Emergency Services in an emergency – calling 9-1-1.
- Only authorized users (employees) can use two-way radios while driving during job tasks deemed “operationally” necessary by the General Manager or designate and units that have been purchased and installed by Fleet Services (City of Hamilton) in City of Hamilton owned commercial (CVOR) vehicles and equipment.
- When applicable, have an employee not driving (passenger) respond to all calls.
- If you are the sole occupant, keep all responses brief. For example, obtaining the address or location of an emergency situation. If more information or detailed conversation is required, pull off the traveled part of the road in a safe location and put the vehicle or equipment in park ensuring the vehicle or equipment is not impeding traffic.

Computer Equipment

- Computer equipment (e.g. laptop) is not to be used by the driver or equipment operator when the vehicle is in motion and/or on the traveled part of a road.
- All computer equipment is to be “secured” when the vehicle is in motion.
REFERENCES

Highway Traffic Act  [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h08_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90h08_e.htm)

Reg. 366/09 – Display screens and Hand-held Devices  

NOTES:

Information on research into driver distraction related to hands-free cell phone use can be found on the National Safety Council (U.S.) web site at  

Contact your JHSC representative, Department Health, Safety and Wellness Specialist for additional information.

In addition to this “guideline”, City of Hamilton employees are expected to be aware of and comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and City of Hamilton procedures and guidelines which are found at:  