

Nestlé Australia

Distracted Drivers: how to engage drivers in workplace road safety and stop mobile phone use while driving



NRSP
NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY

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Organisation: Nestlé Australia
Sites/Staff: 70
Drivers: 400



Case Study:

Motivating change: Clear reasoning and considered implementation change behaviour around mobile phone use in vehicles

Key Outcomes

- Nestlé adopted new approach to go above and beyond legal requirements and cares for its people.
- Road safety research and statistics are helpful to validate an intended approach and can be leveraged to promote buy-in and engagement
- Drivers respond positively to road safety measures when the motivation is to make drivers safer, and when they understand how changes will achieve that outcome
- Employees who drive for work are not immune to the risks faced by the general driving population, and the onus is on employers to manage workplace risks
- Having a well-thought out, staged implementation period that gives everyone time to adjust behaviour promotes high compliance with a new policy
- When organisation leadership, particularly those most impacted, understand the rationale for change and publicly support measures, they become a powerful force for change
- Similarly, encouraging employees to apply road safety evidence to their own circumstance and understand the motivation and how it relates to their performance creates lasting change
- Education, based on solid reasoning for a new road safety policy and sharing that reasoning across the organisation, is more effective than punishment in encouraging compliance.

Synopsis:

When Nestlé in Australia took the bold step to stop mobile phone use while driving, to address driver distraction, it expected some resistance. It got the opposite, receiving virtually unanimous support across all levels of the organisation and employees who drive for work feeling the company values their safety.

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Introduction

As a global food manufacturer, safety risks in its production and distribution facilities are well known to Nestlé. In Australia, the company wanted to extend that mindset on workplace safety to its drivers and the road.

It devised a Safe Driving Policy and Distracted Driver Rules, centered on helping change attitudes and behaviour around mobile phone use while driving, particularly for its salespeople and merchandisers, who spend the most time on the road.

The company approached road safety with the attitude that the same risks that affected the general driving public applied to its drivers, most likely more so given the significant amount of time they spend on the road. This brought fatigue into focus as well driver distraction.

Once it established its key driving risks, Nestlé created a deliberate implementation strategy, which focused on educating rather than punishing drivers and leveraging management support, to create buy-in and engagement.

With many Nestlé employees driving their own vehicles for work, managing grey fleet is another road safety risk the organisation is working to address. However, this case study focuses on Nestlé's journey in creating its safe driving and distracted driving policies, how it drove employee and management engagement with workplace road safety, and what it learned about how to change attitudes towards a common but dangerous driving behaviour.

Company Overview

Nestlé is the world's largest food and beverage company, with a presence in 189 countries and a global workforce of 400,000 people.

The company opened its first office in Australia in Sydney in 1908 and today Nestlé Oceania employs more than 5,000 people in 70 offices, factories and distribution centres across the region.

Nestlé Oceania owns or leases about 300 vehicles ranging from tool of trade vehicles for the sales team, through to heavy vehicles delivering chocolate and other products.

Its Australian workforce is committed to Nestlé's purpose of enhancing the quality of life and contributing to a healthier future, and the company recognises the role it can play in improving road safety and reducing transport risk in Australia as its people in Sales, Supply Chain and Operations take to the roads.

Chain of Responsibility is also a critical focus area as the business relies heavily on heavy vehicles and primary freight to move products throughout the supply chain.

Nestlé makes it a priority to make sure its people and other road users make it home to their family each day. In Australia, Fleet Safety is closely aligned with Nestlé's overall Safety, Health and Environment agenda, with the Oceania Fleet Safety Steering Team taking responsibility for workplace road safety in the company's local operations.

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Extending The Safety Focus

Both in Australia and globally, Nestlé values and prioritises safety. It is skilled in identifying and addressing visible risks in its factories and distribution centres, such as forklift operation, dangerous machinery, working at heights or electrical work. Nestlé in Australia wanted to extend that same focus to employees who drive for work, particularly salespeople and merchandisers.

Driving is the highest cause of death across Nestlé's global operations, and local management believed road safety risks were often taken for granted as driving is an everyday activity for most people. Nestlé's employees in Australia also have access to safer roads, compared to colleagues in less developed markets, adding to complacency around road safety.

In particular, it wanted to highlight two points to its own workforce: the risks of driving that applied to all other drivers applied to them as well, and taking risks on the roads could have catastrophic results for its own people as well as for other road users.

The company examined road safety research in Australia, considered the organisation's experience overseas, and spoke to drivers and company leadership locally to determine the key risks it needed to manage. This highlighted, among other things, that many Nestlé drivers were using their mobile phones while driving. It realised company expectations around safe driving needed to be clear and communicated to its workforce. This process culminated in the Nestlé Oceania Safe Driving Policy, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to safe driving and road safety. The policy outlines both the company's actions to maximise workplace road safety and driver responsibilities to achieve the same objective.

"Nestlé is committed to the safe operation of motor vehicles by adopting a risk management approach to work related driving," the policy says. The company is committed to ensuring, for example:

- Managers and the leadership team lead and embrace road safety.
- Drivers understand their obligations, including complying with road laws and not using mobile phones while driving in accordance with Nestlé's Distracted Driver Rules.
- Drivers receive basic awareness training.
- Nestlé owned or leased vehicles are maintained in a legal and roadworthy condition.
- Incidents are investigated and driver performance monitored to identify issues and areas for improvement.

Driver responsibilities outlined by the Safe Driving Policy include:

- Taking reasonable care for their own and the safety of others while driving and always driving safely and within the speed limit.
- Not operate a Nestlé owned or leased vehicle unless they are fit to do so; this includes impairment due to health, alcohol, drugs and fatigue.
- Regularly inspect vehicles used for Nestlé work purposes and ensure vehicles are maintained in a legal and roadworthy condition.
- Report all incidents.
- Avoid distractions and not use a mobile phone while driving, including hands-free devices.

The Safe Driving Policy applies to all Nestlé's employees and contractors whenever they are driving a Nestlé owned vehicle or when they are driving a personal vehicle for work purposes. The policy is signed by the company CEO and Sales Director.

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Driver Distraction

While the Nestlé Oceania Safe Driving Policy outlines several road safety measures, the key road risk the company identified – and the one that required major changes in company practices and driver attitudes – was distracted driving, particularly use of mobile phones while driving.

The risks of using mobile phones while driving are well documented. For example, the driver had been distracted before impact in 70 per cent of collisions, and eating, reading, reaching for a drink or texting significantly increases your risk of crashing.

Nestlé shared such research in devising and implementing its Distracted Driver Rules, which makes it clear that while driving a vehicle for company business, Nestlé employees must not carry out activities that distract their attention from driving safely.

That includes making or answering calls; using hand-held or hands-free mobile phones; reading or writing text, email or other messages; entering data into navigation devices; and using headsets or earphones to listen to music or the radio.

The rules apply at all times when driving a company car or car hired in relation to business or when driving a private car for the purposes of work.

While banning mobile phone use in vehicles being used for work purposes was in line with Nestlé's direction globally, the Australian operation went one step further by also reversing the previous practice of allowing hands-free kits because they impair driver awareness on the roads.

A Planned Implementation

A key element in Nestlé driving employee engagement with the Safe Driving Policy and Distracted Driver Rules was the deliberate and considered way changes were implemented, with the main reason for the change – to keep its people safe – consistently reinforced to the workforce.

The Safe Driving Policy was outlined at the company's annual sales conference, attended by the majority of Nestlé employees who drive for work. The significant change in Nestlé's practice around distracted driving and use of mobile phones in vehicles was highlighted, and it was also stressed that those driving for work had time to change their behaviour – the change would be introduced in six months – but should start employing strategies to help them comply. Like any 'addiction', using mobile phones while driving would take time to break.

After outlining its safety direction to the 300-strong conference audience, Nestlé played a powerful video depicting teenagers discussing the impacts of distracted driving. Ten seconds of silence deliberately followed the video, before one of Nestlé's sales leaders told the audience they 'did not want to be the person who caused those sorts of events'.

The deliberate, courageous strategy resulted in virtually all sales staff immediately getting on board with the new safety direction, breaking down barriers and resistance because they understood the company's motivations.

The handful who questioned the new policies quickly came on board once their concerns were answered and it was clear their colleagues supported the direction – the first sign of a new culture emerging.

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Taking an Education Approach

Its focus on educating drivers about the new Safe Driving Policy and the reasons for it reflect Nestlé's overall approach to road safety, prioritising education and stakeholder buy-in over compliance and punishment.

The company prefers to educate employees about why a change is 'the right thing to do', believing that encourages engagement and, in turn, compliance and buy-in. It, for example, does not perform mobile phone checks on drivers to ensure they are complying with the new Distracted Driver Rules. It has however made it clear mobile phone records may be checked as part of investigations into an incident to establish whether a phone was being used in the lead up.

Education was also important to make it clear, to managers and drivers alike, that it was now acceptable to not answer your phone immediately, and only respond to a missed call when it was safe to do so.

This focus on empowering and engaging employees resulted in managers checking at the beginning of a phone discussion if someone was driving, creating a 'reinforcement loop', particularly in the early days of the new policy. If employees book a rental car, a message pops up reminding the driver that Nestlé policy does not permit use of mobile phones while driving, further reinforcing the policy.

This education approach extends to other road safety issues, such as fatigue awareness and risk mitigation, with regular online training, through Nestlé's global Virtual Risk Manager tool, supported by face-to-face reinforcement from line managers, including at quarterly 'cycle meetings' between salespeople and line managers.

Circuit Breaker

The Nestlé Oceania Fleet Safety team expected resistance from drivers to new road safety measures, particularly no longer allowing the use of mobile phones in vehicles. It got the opposite.

"We actually got people coming to us saying 'you know what, I think this is a great direction and I'm really proud to work for a company that recognises there is an increased risk and doesn't want us to be exposed that increased risk'," says the company's Fleet Safety Manager Luke Byrnes.

"Someone told me a story about being at a barbecue or a party and they were asked 'how's work?'. They said 'good. Nestlé just told us we cannot use our mobile phones when we drive'. The person they were talking to was very negative about that.

"Our employee said 'actually I think it's brilliant I've got an employer who wants me to get to my destination safely and is prepared for me not to pick up the phone if my boss rings or is prepared for me not to talk on the phone until I get there safely,' and put a real positive spin on it.

"Whenever we were talking about the new policy, it was never about 'we want to make your day harder or make you less productive' it was really about getting you home to the people who love you."

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A Partnership Approach

In preparing the ground work for introduction of the new policy, and consistent with Nestlé's education approach, the company shared best practice tips with drivers to help them comply when the time came, urging them to think about what they needed to do to make changes and discuss strategies with colleagues. Those tips included:

- o Switching your phone off will stop all calls, texts and social media.
- o Put your phone beyond all use by placing it in the boot of your car.
- o Plan your journeys and balance them with calls and emails.
- o Switch off the Bluetooth connection in your vehicle.
- o Call before you drive (it worked before mobile phones).
- o Talk to your customers about the changes and the reasons for them.

In addition to practical tips, Nestlé also created and shared FAQs for employees and business partners, answering common questions it anticipated, such as if any exemptions apply (no), if drivers had to stop using hands-free kit previously fitted to a Nestlé vehicle (yes) and whether reading emails or other messages was allowed (no again).

A key challenge addressed was around how to recalibrate the expectations of customers, who could previously reach salespeople via mobile phone as needed. Employees were advised to explain the changes to their customers and the reason for them – that is, “when you decide to make a call you are four times more likely to be involved in an accident... This change is entirely about putting the safety of our employees and other road users first.”



Most customers were not only accepting of the change but supportive of Nestlé's leadership in this area. After all, it's commonly accepted people are more distracted when using a mobile phone. Other common concerns addressed included:

- o **Would the changes affect business performance and give competitors an advantage?** It was pointed out that other organisations who had implemented similar policies showed very little impact on business performance. Nestlé had implemented similar changes in other markets without issue.
- o **Who the policy impacts, including those who don't drive for work,** reinforcing those employees also had a role in helping colleagues comply by, for example, not calling if they knew someone was driving or checking if they were driving at the start of a call.
- o **How the policy is enforced and will phone records be checked,** reinforcing Nestlé's belief employees would see the benefits in making the change.

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Engaging Leadership

Nestlé's Safe Driving Policy specifically outlines that all managers and company leadership lead and embrace road safety to ensure employees and other road users are kept safe on the road.

This tenet has had a powerful flow-on effect in encouraging engagement and compliance, both in company and line leadership reflecting the importance of road safety and in activities encouraging compliance with new road safety measures.

The first step in Nestlé's road safety journey was the Fleet Safety Steering Team putting its suggested policy to the SLT, the Senior Leadership Team, which includes the CEO. Senior leadership buy-in was easily achieved, as it was clear suggested changes would help Nestlé's people safely reach their destination and was also the 'right thing' for other road users.

The approved policy was then signed off by the Sales Director, not just the CEO, recognising that role had 'the most skin in the game', that is, their team would be the most impacted. Having their name at the bottom of the policy also sent a strong message to drivers, not least because it presented the policy as being led by the organisation rather than the Safety team. "Coming from the sales director is much more impactful than from the safety team," is how Nestlé's Fleet Safety Manager put it.

The Safety team did, however, work with the Sales Director and other leaders to ensure they understood the policy and the reasons for it as well as shaping messages for the wider workforce, including that salespeople were most effective when 100 per cent engaged with their clients face-to-face rather than dividing their focus between their clients and the road. Those messages then cascaded from the Sales Director, through line managers at regular meetings, to drivers to reinforce road safety outcomes.

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As Nestlé implemented its new Safe Driving Policy and Distracted Driver Rules, several examples of strong safety leadership emerged, reflecting the buy-in it was able to gain from managers and demonstrating that the shifts in behaviour required, particularly around not using mobile phones while driving, could be achieved.'

- **Leading by example:** Previously, team members not in the office could dial-in to weekly team 'huddle' meetings. In the lead up to, and early stages of, implementation, managers began those meetings by checking that no-one was driving and, if they were, asking them to dial back in when it was safe to do so. Managers acknowledged the Distracted Driver Rules, in particular, were a big shift and reminded drivers to begin changing their practices in preparation for the official implementation date.
- **Shifting sands:** As a global corporation with headquarters in Europe, some Nestlé employees in Australia have afternoon teleconferences. Many of those employees chose to participate while driving home, meaning drivers' attention was divided between driving and the teleconference. Empowered by Nestlé's flexible work arrangements employees were able to leave work earlier and participate in those calls from home, eliminating driver distraction while making it easier to fulfil family responsibilities.
- **Safety champion:** Independent of the Safety team, the leader of a new sales team told her people she believed they had the most dangerous job in the company because one lapse of concentration on the road could be fatal. She told her team their role was to be in front of their customers selling (which they were good at) – not to talk to customers on the telephone – and they could not fulfil their role if they were in hospital or had damaged their vehicle.

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Results and Learnings

It is too soon for Nestlé to measure on-the-ground results from its road safety policies, with early efforts focusing on culture and behaviour and creating a baseline to compare the effects of changes.

However, there have been strong indications of a positive response to workplace road safety measures, such as drivers posting and sharing messages on the company's internal social network supporting the changes and reinforcing they are working. For example, an employee's post saying they had not received any phone calls despite driving for several hours over two days had been shared by several colleagues.

The reaction to a six-month introduction period for changes also indicated Nestlé was on the right track, with most teams wondering why the company wasn't acting immediately.

Nestlé's approach to implementing its new road safety policies, particularly around mobile phone use, reinforced two key tenets of promoting engagement and buy-in among those affected by, and those responsible for, the changes.

The first is to clearly explain the reasons for the change. In Nestlé's case, it continually reinforced the reason for addressing distracted driving in particular was to ensure drivers made it home safely.



To Bull Bar or Not to Bull Bar?

Nestlé's considered and methodical approach to workplace road safety in Australia is reflected in how it decided whether to install bull bars on vehicles in regional areas.

Intuitively, local managers thought bull bars were effective in ensuring the safety of drivers operating in regional areas, who were at risk of having a collision with an animal.

Nestlé Australia's Safety team researched issues around installing – or not installing – bull bars on all relevant vehicles, including the ramifications for its people and other road users. That research including speaking to road safety experts like ANCAP (the Australasian New Car Assessment Program) and the National Road Safety Partnership Program (NRSPP).

While it found bull bars protected vehicles in a collision, there was little evidence they protected the occupant. In fact, bull bars could influence vehicle safety, for example, influencing the performance of air bags in a crash and increasing vehicle stopping distances, and increased the potential for harm to pedestrians and cyclists.

The Safety team took its research back to the Senior Leadership Team and it was decided no new Nestlé vehicles would be fitted with bull bars. The devices would also be removed from existing vehicles because vehicles that leave Nestlé's fleet remain on Australian roads for another decade.

Even though the decision only impacted 20 Nestlé vehicles, the company still applied the same rigour and research it does to all workplace road safety decisions, reinforcing to all drivers and managers that there are good reasons behind every decision.

Secondly, place internal policies in a wider context, demonstrating that decisions made internally impact the safety of other road users. Nestlé drivers are driving on the same roads as the general public and, just like them, those drivers have sons, daughters, husbands or wives. This also recognises Nestlé's wider focus on creating shared valued with communities in road safety.