

Maverick Safety Matters

Environmental Health & Safety

SPRING 2019

E H
& S

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Driving Policy Updates Address Distracted Driving, Contain Added Van Restrictions

The University recognizes a responsibility for UTA vehicles to be operated in a safe manner. Vehicles shall be used legally, courteously and safely. To help reduce the risk of accidental loss and increase the safety of our employees, Procedure 8-6, Driving Records/Training, has been revised to include new requirements for driving 12 and 15 Passenger Vans.

Effective immediately, only employees who satisfy the acceptable 3-year driving history requirement will be authorized to drive 12 and 15 passenger vans. Any employee who does not have a full history for the immediate preceding 36 months will not be approved to operate 12 and 15 passenger vans.

Employees who previously completed 12 and 15 Passenger Van Training and were certified to drive will no longer be authorized to drive vans until they have attained 3 years of acceptable driving history.

In addition, a new section has been added setting forth procedures related to distracted driving. Section VI states that the following conduct is prohibited while driving a university-owned vehicle or driving a personal vehicle for University business:

- Use of a handheld cell phone while operating a vehicle. This includes answering or making phone calls, engaging in phone conversations, and reading or responding to emails, instant messages, tweets, and text messages.
- Operating laptops, tablets, portable media devices, and GPS devices.
- Reading maps or any type of document, printed or electronic.

These restrictions apply whether the vehicle is in motion or stopped at a traffic light. Drivers must pull over safely to the side of the road or another safe location before checking messages, returning calls, text messaging, emailing, reading maps for directions, programming GPS devices, etc.

Employees must also adhere to all state and local distracted driving laws.

Please go to [Procedure 8-6](#) to review the complete driving regulations. Information about driving UTA vehicles is also available on the [EH&S website](#).

If you have any questions, please contact EH&S at ehsafety@uta.edu or 817-272-2185.

5 EH&S Staff Reach Employment Milestones

Five of our department's employees will be receiving longevity awards this year.



Our Director, **Leah V. Hoy**, and Assistant Director, **Ramon Ruiz**, have both worked at UTA for 25 years. Leah and Ramon started at EH&S on the same day as entry level safety technicians, and have continuously advanced into the leadership roles they hold today. Leah was named EH&S director in 2011,



and until recently also served as Radiation and Laser Safety Officer. She attained her B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies with emphasis in Environmental Science and Administration. Ramon has a B.S. in Environmental Science and was previously the Laboratory and Environmental Manager.

Caron Miller, Workers' Compensation Claims Analyst, has achieved 15 years with our office. She



works part-time in a job share position. Caron has a B.S. in Rehabilitation Science and was instrumental in establishing UTA's Return to Work Program for employees injured on the job.

Merja Karwoski and **Harvey Richey** each have 10 years of service to the University. Merja is our Biological Safety Specialist with extensive knowledge in the field of microbiology. Her education includes a master of science and a doctorate.



Harvey is the Engineering Research and Laser Safety Specialist, and the University's designated Laser Safety Officer. He has a bachelor's and master's degree in biology with a chemistry minor.



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The Dangers of Distracted Driving

Distracted driving is a factor in approximately four million crashes in North America each year. The Canadian and American Automobile Associations (CAA and AAA) have identified the following deadly driving distractors:

1. Cell phones
2. Objects, people and events outside of the vehicle
3. Adjusting radio and vehicle controls
4. Vehicle occupants
5. Something moving in the car
6. Using another object or device
7. Eating and drinking

See how you do on this quick test:

You are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash if you are texting. True / False

What is considered a safe following distance?

- A. At least two seconds.
- B. At least four seconds.
- C. Close enough not to let another car get in front of you.

Which is the best option to help you stay alert?

- A. Loud music.
- B. Fresh air.
- C. Being rested and making periodic stops.
- D. A double espresso.

Using a car and a cell phone requires you to See, Hear, Do and Think. True / False

Driving requires us to **See, Hear, Do, and Think**. The seven distractors require at least one of these skills as well. Using a cell

phone to text or carry on a conversation requires you to use **all four** skills – See, Hear, Do and Think.

Which is why, even though all seven distractors mentioned earlier are dangerous, cell phone usage ranks at the top of the list for distracting behaviors that increase your chances of being involved in a crash or near crash event.

- Text messaging (or texting) on a cell phone – 23 times more likely
- Talking on a cell phone – 4 to 5 times more likely
- Reading – 3 times more likely
- Applying makeup – 3 times more likely
- Reaching for a moving object – 9 times more likely
- Dialing on a hand-held device – 3 times more likely
- Talking or listening on a hand-held device – 1.3 times more likely



Driving while talking or texting on a cell phone not only puts you at risk for an accident—it can also result in an expensive fine and demerit points on your driver's licence if police catch you doing it. Many states and provinces prohibit cell phone use while driving, and many employers also have strict policies prohibiting this practice.

How to Protect Yourself

Before you start out for a drive here are five easy tips you can practice to avoid distracted driving:

1. Give yourself plenty of travel time and make sure you're well rested and alert.
2. Review all maps and directions and pre-program your route on your vehicle's global positioning system (GPS).
3. Stow and secure loose objects.
4. Prepare children and other passengers with everything they need. Don't forget to secure pets too.
5. Lastly, preset the controls on your vehicle's climate control system and audio system.

While You Are Driving:

1. Let calls go to voicemail and don't read or return texts. Do not surf the Internet or read emails. If you think you'll be tempted to check your phone, turn it off or place it in your vehicle's glove compartment.
2. Do not eat, drink, smoke, apply makeup or engage in any other grooming activities.
3. Stop at safe locations such as rest stops or a commuter lot, to make and receive calls or take care of the needs of children, passengers or pets.
4. Keep your eyes and mind on the road.
5. Stop periodically to help you stay alert. If you are fighting the urge to sleep, consuming caffeine, opening the windows to let in fresh air and blasting music won't keep you safe and alert. You need to find a safe place to pull over and take a nap.
6. Finally, maintain at least a two-second following distance between your vehicle and the vehicle in front of you. Using the two-second rule significantly reduces your chances of being involved in a motor vehicle accident. Increase your following distance beyond two seconds in inclement weather, heavy traffic and while passing through highway work zones.

Safe driving demands your undivided attention. Keep your eyes and your mind on the road. Driving and multitasking can never safely coexist. If you need to make or take a phone call, check driving directions or select some different music, pull over into a safe place. Two minutes of inconvenience seems like a more than fair trade for a few extra years or decades of life.

Content obtained from Bongarde Safe Supervisor Safety Talk

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Meet Our Newest Safety Specialist



Kelsey Contreras has joined EH&S as our new Chemical Safety Specialist. Kelsey is a recent graduate of Texas A&M University-Commerce with a Master's in Biological Science. Her undergraduate degree was in Wildlife Conservation.

While attending Texas A&M-Commerce Kelsey served as a graduate teaching assistant, graduate research assistant, and also worked as a lead resident assistant. She spent two summers as an intern at Ray Roberts State Park. For her master's degree thesis she researched monarch butterfly host plant health and survivorship. Kelsey loves spending time outdoors and is very passionate about protecting the environment.

Kelsey's duties will include managing UTA's Hazardous Waste Program by consulting with faculty and staff on proper waste management, picking up and disposing of hazardous waste, and inspecting laboratories for regulatory compliance. She brings a lot of energy and enthusiasm to her new position.

Kelsey grew up locally, graduating from Garland High School. She has been married for one year to her husband, Dave, who is a police officer at Texas A&M-Commerce.

UTA Emergency Communications Systems

As Texas enters spring and tornado season approaches, remember to download [MavSafe](#), the UTA emergency response plan app, to have access to step by step emergency guidelines on your smart phone, tablet or computer.

The [EH&S Emergency Source page](#) also provides a comprehensive list of links that will guide you to other resources and information you might need to stay safe in the event of an emergency.

The **MavAlert!** Emergency Notification System keeps the University community informed about emergency situations and rapidly changing conditions, from hazardous weather and campus closures to building emergencies and life-threatening criminal activity. During an emergency, the Police Department will advise on what actions to take by sending early warning text messages to phones, email accounts, and other registered communications devices. Be sure you are [signed up for MavAlert!](#) and that your phone number is updated and current.

Health Update: Seasonal Flu Outbreak

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), seasonal influenza activity has increased, reaching a new high for this season. For the week ending February 16 (week 7), the proportion of people seeing their health care provider for influenza-like illness (ILI) increased from 4.8% to 5.1%, which is above the national baseline of 2.2%. The number of states experiencing high ILI activity increased from 26 states plus New York City last week to 30 states plus New York City (Texas is included in this list). In Texas, the CDC reports flu activity has been widespread since mid-January.

Getting a yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step in protecting against influenza and its potentially serious complications. The CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October.

Flu-like symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people, especially children, may have vomiting and diarrhea. People may also be infected with flu and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

Taking everyday preventive actions can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu:

- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone for 24 hours without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. After using a tissue, throw it in the trash and wash your hands.
- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs like flu.

Practice other good health habits such as getting plenty of sleep, being physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

Coming to work with a cold, flu or other illness can make everyone less productive. A study found that a single sneeze from a worker with the flu can infect an entire room with the virus for hours.

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Check out
EH&S on
Facebook
to keep up
with all our
events &
training:

[UT Arlington
Environmental
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Office](#)



Biological Safety Specialist Merja Karwoski dons personal protective equipment to contain and clean a spill that occurred in the Chemistry Research Building last October.

EH&S Responds to Chemical Spill

In October EH&S responded to a chemical spill in the Chemistry Research Building. Chemicals that were being stored in a freezer began leaking into the lab area when the shelving inside collapsed. Safety Specialists Shea McDowell and Merja Karwoski entered the lab wearing a Tyvek suit, booties, respirator, and double gloved to clean up the spill.

All the chemical containers were removed from the freezer until the shelving could be repaired. The inside of the freezer was wiped down, as well as the floor in front of the freezer where the chemicals had leaked.

EH&S personnel are trained in hazardous material handling, and are always ready and available to assist laboratories if a spill or situation occurs that lab personnel do not feel comfortable managing on their own. Please do not hesitate to call our office (817-272-2185) and report these types of incidents so we can make sure the area is cleaned properly and safe for continued use by lab students, researchers, and other building occupants.

Notify the UTA Police Department at their emergency number, 817-272-3003, if the emergency involves injuries that require immediate medical attention or the services of the Fire Department.

EH&S TRAINING COURSES

Online safety training is located on the EH&S training management website: <https://uta-ehs.org>

Bloodborne Pathogens for Laboratory Research Personnel
Bloodborne Pathogens (Non-Research)
BioSafety Level 2
On-Site Biohazardous Waste Management
Vaccinia Virus
Laser Safety
Radiation Awareness
Radiation Producing Machine
Hazard Communication & Waste Mgmt- Academic
Hazard Communication & Waste Mgmt- Non-Academic
Fire Alarm Device

Back Injury Prevention
Confined Space Entry Awareness
Hand & Power Tool Safety
Hearing Conservation
Lockout/Tagout
Respiratory Protection
Class C Underground Storage Tank
Defensive Driving Awareness
12 & 15 Passenger Van
Powered Industrial Truck (Forklift)

Call us at 817-272-2185 to schedule specific trainings not available online:

Radioactive Materials Hot Work Safety Fire Extinguisher Respirator Fit Testing

The [Great Escape with Fire Extinguisher Training](#) and [Evacuation Chair](#) in person trainings are offered on a bimonthly basis. [Click here for the schedule](#). Please call to sign up for a date.

DRIVING UTA VEHICLES

Defensive Driving Awareness - This online course must be completed every 3 years to remain an authorized driver of UTA vehicles. Additionally, an individual driving record check (MVR) must be updated annually.

12 & 15 Passenger Van Training: Take the online course first. A behind-the-wheel driving test is also required and will be conducted on the dates and times below at the EH&S office, 500 Summit Ave. Drivers must have already passed the Defensive Driving Course and have a current approved driving record check (MVR) to attend. **Class size is limited, so please call 817-272-2185 to register ahead of time.**

April 8—10:00am

May 2—2:00pm

June 4—10:00am

April 18—2:00pm

May 8—2:00pm

June 24—10:00am



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