

Safety Alert – Walking with Mobile Phones

Number 15-15



1 BACKGROUND

In 2015 a number of University staff have required medical treatment for injuries that have occurred from using their smart phone to text, email or use social media while walking around campus. Researchers at University of Queensland found that the habit leads to uneven walking, a slower pace, rigid posture and poor balance. The study from the University of Queensland, *Texting and Walking: Strategies for Postural Control and Implications for Safety*, sought to investigate the effect using a mobile phone had on people's ability to walk and their subsequent safety when in public. To read the full article:

visit: <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0084312>

Many people think walking and texting/reading their phone is not hazardous, but recent studies show it is, as the person is so consumed with their phone that they don't see the surrounding hazards. When using your smart phone to text or read emails you're not full control with the action of walking because you can't see the path in front of you. A study from Stony Brook University showed that when people used their mobile phones while walking, they were 61 percent more likely to veer off course than when they were not distracted. People who use their smart phones while walking also pose a hazard to other people as well as themselves as their distraction makes it more likely that they may walk into someone else with the potential to cause harm.

2 ACTION REQUIRED

Many of us are working on bushland campuses that have a number of hazards that we need to be conscious of such as leaf matter on paths, walking on uneven ground, other pedestrians including people on pushbikes and skateboards. We request that staff refrain from checking their emails and texting people on their smart phones while walking around campus so that they concentrate on getting to their destination safely.

3 ASSISTANCE

If further information or advice is required call the Health and Safety team on 49218847 (x18847).

If a staff member is injured they should contact the **Injury Hotline on telephone 4033 9999 (x39999)** and press 4 to speak to a member of the Health & Safety team. They should also notify their supervisor and log an online incident report.