



1550 Crystal Drive
Suite 804
Arlington, VA 22202
T 202.244.4700
F 202.966.4818

September 16, 2021

Hon. Susan Rice
Chair, Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Ambassador Rice,

The waste and recycling industry faces an ongoing safety issue from mobile phones being used by consumers while driving. Distracted drivers cause injuries to and fatalities of waste and recycling collection workers, many of whom are people of color. Far from being isolated incidents, the volume and frequency of workers being struck on the road by distracted drivers in part has led the waste and recycling industry to be named to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Top 10 list of deadliest professions. These victims are the same men and women who heroically remained on the job throughout the pandemic to prevent a waste-induced public health crisis.

The Centers for Disease Control noted that "In the U.S. in 2018, over 2,800 people were killed and an estimated 400,000 were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver. About 1 in 5 of the people who died in crashes involving a distracted driver in 2018 were not in vehicles—they were walking, riding their bikes, or otherwise outside a vehicle."

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) is the voice in the nation's capital for the private sector waste and recycling industry that is essential to maintaining the quality of American life. The delivery of waste and recycling services impacts all residential, commercial and industrial properties on a daily basis. NWRA members operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and can be found in most, if not all, U.S. congressional districts. Waste and recycling facilities number nearly 18,000 scattered throughout the U.S., mirroring population centers. NWRA is the recipient of the American Society of Association Executive's 2021 Summit Award for its efforts throughout the pandemic to keep its industry workers safe.

In the past, there has been a game of agency hot potato when it comes to the issue of mobile phones and the dangers that they present to drivers on our nation's roads and highways. StopDistractions.org CEO Jennifer Smith wrote, "When I lost my mom in 2008 I also contacted the Consumer Product Safety Commission. They pointed to [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration], NHTSA then sent me to the FCC, and the FCC sent me back to CPSC. It is a never-ending circle of pointing the finger at someone else to fix the epidemic of distracted driving and it just continues to get worse over time. When will someone in our federal government stick their neck out and do something about one of the leading killers on our roads???"

Within the past month, NWRA requested meetings with the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) to discuss this issue. CPSC initially refused to meet with NWRA inferring that the agency did not have jurisdiction over mobile phones and suggested NWRA take up the issue with agencies within the federal Department of Transportation (DOT). CPSC later reversed course and NWRA met with CPSC Chairman Robert Adler and his staff on September 8. NWRA contacted NHTSA per CPSC's original suggestion and NHTSA responded that it was a state issue despite multiple other agencies within the DOT having directly addressed the issue within their domains.

NWRA urges the Domestic Policy Council to coordinate the various departments, agencies and other entities across the federal government on their response to the dangers that mobile phones and distracted driving present to highway users in general and waste and recycling collection workers specifically.

Should you have any questions, please contact NWRA's Chief Counsel & Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Jim Riley at 202-364-3744 or jriley@wasterecycling.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrell K. Smith".

Darrell K. Smith, PhD, CAE, CIH
President and CEO