

Why Properly Worded Cell Phone Policies Are A Must

Cell phones are an integral part of life, but they can also be a source of distraction in the workplace. As an employer, you want your employees to be able to concentrate on their tasks without interference. Since your company policy most likely includes guidelines about cell phone usage during work hours, one recent National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) [determination](#) is worth noting.

The Policy and the Problem

In an attempt to limit employees' usage of personal cell phones at work, ADT, LLC restricted their use to "work-related or critical, quality of life activities." The company defined these activities as "communicating with service or health professionals who cannot be reached during a break or after business hours." It also banned text messaging and digital photography, stating they were "not to be used during working hours."

According to the NLRB, the policy was unlawful because employees' personal conversations during non-working hours cannot be regulated. Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) gives employees the right to converse freely during their breaks or lunch periods through their own choice of media. By being so specific in their policy's wording, ADT employees might reasonably assume that using their phones during break or lunch time was also prohibited.

The Takeaway

While your policies may be written with the intention of minimizing distractions, be sure they follow NLRB standards. If the policy appears to apply during non-work hours, your company could face legal repercussions.