

Driving and Personal Electronic Use

FACT SHEET

Distracted driving:

- ≈ costs BC approximately \$1 billion each year
- ≈ makes up 25% of total vehicle crashes
- ≈ leads to 1,400 hospitalizations each year
- ≈ causes 117 deaths per year

Studies have shown texting while driving is more dangerous than impaired driving!

32% of BC vehicle fatalities in 2010 were linked to distracted driving.



Under section 214 of the British Columbian *Motor Vehicle Act*, it is illegal to use any hand-held device while operating a vehicle. This legislation was introduced in 2010 to promote safe driving and reduce injuries related to distracted drivers. Hand-held devices include cell phones and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices. Other electronic devices such as GPS and music systems can be used if they are programmed prior to driving and not held and operated while driving.

How will this law affect me?

All ten provinces in Canada have banned the use of cell phones and other hand-held devices while driving. Drivers are no longer allowed to operate hand-held cell phones for conversations, text messaging, or emailing, although they can use hands-free devices. However, new drivers under the graduated licensing program are not permitted to use any hand-held or hands-free devices.

Why is there a need to ban cell phone use while driving?

Using a cell phone while driving is a serious road safety issue; it takes attention away from driving. People are more likely to be involved in a collision while driving and using a cell phone. This distraction puts drivers at risk for serious physical and property damage. One-third of British Columbia's fatal motor vehicle crashes involved driving while distracted by using a cell phone to talk, text, or email while driving. This ban has been designed to increase road safety for everyone.

How is this ban enforced? Are there penalties or fines?

A driver who is talking on a hand-held device may be given a \$167 penalty. A driver who is using a hand-held device for communicating (texting, dialing, or emailing) may be given a \$167 fine plus 3 penalty points. All drivers in the Graduated License Program (GLP) can be fined \$167 plus receive 3 penalty points for using either hand-held or hands-free electronic devices, with the exception of GPS and audio systems pre-programmed prior to driving and not held or operated by a GLP driver.

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It is illegal to use a hand-held device while stopped at a red light.

Driving Tips!

Put your phone in the backseat to avoid the temptation to answer or look at it while driving.

Turn your phone off while you drive.

Let your voicemail take the call so that you can return the call when safely parked at your destination.

Pull over and answer only when it is safe to do so.

Is anyone exempt from this legislation?

Emergency services including police officers, firefighters, and paramedics are exempt from this legislation. Drivers can call 911 or place a call for emergency purposes only.

Are there any devices that are allowed to be used while driving?

Hands-free devices, such as an earpiece or bluetooth are allowed for experienced drivers, but not for drivers in the Graduated Licence Program. However, studies of crash risk have not found a significant decrease in crashes or safety benefits from using hands-free devices. Instead, it is best to pull over to use any electronic devices. Global positioning systems (GPS) and audio players for a vehicle's music system are allowed while driving but they must be properly secured and programmed before the vehicle is moving.

Resources

- Hands-Free Info
<http://handsfreeinfo.com/canadian-cell-phone-law-updates>
- Motor Vehicle Act
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/96318_06

**Centre for Public Safety and
Criminal Justice Research**

33844 King Road
Abbotsford, BC
V2S 7M8
604 854-4553
<http://cjr.ufv.ca>