

Driving and Personal Electronic Use

Definition: 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.

Q: How will this law affect me?

A: 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 will not be able to use any hand-held or hands-free devices.

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

A: Using a cell phone while driving is a serious road safety issue because it can cause a driver to become distracted while driving. People are more likely to be involved in a collision while driving and using a cell phone; therefore, this ban is designed to increase road safety for everyone.

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

A: A driver who is talking on a hand-held device can be given a \$167 penalty. A driver who is using a hand-held device for communicating (ie. texting, dialing, or emailing) can be given a \$167 fine and 3 penalty points. All drivers in the Graduated License Program (GLP) can be fined \$167 and 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.

Distracted driving costs BC approximately \$1 billion each year

❖ **Make up 25% of total vehicle crashes**

❖ **1,400 hospitalizations per year**

❖ **117 deaths per year**

Source:

https://www.bcma.org/files/TimetoHangUp_July09.pdf

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

Source:

<http://www.theprovince.com/technology/cellphone+drivers/1933946/story.html>

32% of B.C. vehicle fatalities in 2010 can be linked to distracted driving resulting in 107 deaths.

Source:

<http://handsfreeinfo.com/british-columbia-distracted-driving-news>

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

Source:

http://www.icbc.com/csDelPrd/Satellite?c=ICBC_FAQ_C&cid=1225927719586&pagename=ICBC%2FICBC_FAQ_C%2Ficbc_FAQQuestion&proxied=true#1225927719586

- Tips as you drive:**
- 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 and return the call when you are safely parked at your destination
 - Pull over and answer when it is safe to do so

"Collisions caused by distracted drivers negatively impacts the health of Canadians, our safety, [and] our trade and tourism..."

Source:

<http://www.caa.ca/driventodistracton/how/index.html>

Q: Is anyone exempt from this legislation?

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

Q: What are the risks associated with using cell phones while driving?

A: Talking on the phone or using other electronic devices takes attention away from driving. This distraction puts drivers at risk for motor vehicle crashes that can result in 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.

Q: Are there any devices that are allowed?

A: 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 that play through the vehicle's music system are allowed while driving, but they must be properly secured and programmed before the vehicle is moving.

Q: How do I obtain more information?

A: Further details on the ban of all hand-held devices while driving can be found in the resources listed below or by calling the BC Centre for Social Responsibility (www.bccsr.ca) at 1-877-388-8755.

Resources

- Canadian Automobile Association.
<http://www.caa.ca/driventodistracton/how/index.html>
- B.C.'s Distracted Driving Laws. <http://www.drivecellsafe.ca>
- Road Safety ICBC
http://www.icbc.com/csDelPrd/Satellite?c=ICBC_FAQ_C&cid=1225927719586&pagename=ICBC%2FICBC_FAQ_C%2Ficbc_FAQQuestion&proxied=true#1225927719586
- 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