

PENNSYLVANIA JOINS 34 OTHER STATES IN BAN ON TEXTING WHILE DRIVING



In the technological world, many people use a cell phone for a variety of reasons throughout the day. They make calls, update their Facebook, tweet their friends, and send texts. Using a cell while operating a vehicle, however, has become a concern in numerous countries, and a growing number of states in the U.S. are banning such use when behind the wheel. The most pressing issue seems to be texting, as it's a simple function available on many phones and plans and does not require a more expensive smartphone. Recently Pennsylvania has joined the majority of states that have placed a ban on texting while driving. Legislation signed by the governor, Tom Corbett, makes texting while driving a primary offense and will include a fifty dollar fine. The new law, which will take effect on March 8, 2012, is intended to prevent drivers from utilizing a mobile device to read, write or send a text message. It specifies such a device as an Interactive Wireless Communication Device (IWCD), defined as a wireless phone, personal digital assistant, smartphone, mobile computer, or comparable devices with the capabilities of texting, instant messaging, email or Internet access. The law further characterizes a "text-based message" as a text, instant message, email, or any written form of communication transmitted or received via an IWCD. The new legislation will supersede or preempt any existing local ordinances which limit drivers' using a mobile device. The Pennsylvania governor's office states that distracted drivers resulted in nearly 14,000 vehicular collisions in 2010. Of that total, approximately 1,100 of the crashes may have been indirectly caused by the use of a cell phone. At a bill-signing event, Gov. Corbett said that the new law "aims to put a halt to texting from behind the wheel and is intended to save lives. No text message is worth a human life. The message of this legislation is drive now and text later." The governor further stated, "We've said it in the past, but today we are making it law: If you have an urgent need to text, you must pull over and park. If it's not important enough to stop your car, then it's certainly not important enough to risk a life." This makes Pennsylvania the 35th state to ban texting while driving. The other states with a ban include the following (as well as Washington, DC and Guam): Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. Of the remaining 15 states, Arizona, Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Ohio, South Carolina and South Dakota currently have no ban on texting while driving. Alabama, Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and West Virginia do not ban all drivers but do enforce a limited texting ban (e.g., Texas drivers cannot use a cell phone in a school zone).

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