

DYING TO TAKE THE CALL?



THINK

www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk

Switch off before you drive off

Mobile phones and driving don't mix

Mobile phones have many benefits. They provide security and can be a great help in an emergency. But tests have shown a driver cannot help being distracted by a phone call or text message. If you are distracted, you will not register hazards or react quickly. A conversation on a hands-free phone is no less distracting than using a hand-held one.

Points on your licence

It is illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving and the penalties are going up. From 27 February 2007 you will receive a £60 fine and three penalty points on your licence¹. Points can mean higher insurance costs.

You don't have to be caught many times to be disqualified. If you get just six points in the first two years after passing your test, you will lose your licence under the New Drivers Act.

You can also be prosecuted for using a **hands-free** mobile phone if you are not in proper control of your vehicle. The penalties will be the same as for using a hand-held phone. And the penalties for driving carelessly or dangerously when using any phone can include disqualification, a large fine and up to two years imprisonment.

¹ If the case goes to court you risk up to a maximum of £1,000 (£2,500 for drivers of vans, lorries, buses and coaches).

Why are the penalties going up?

- Surveys show that over 90% of respondents say it should be illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. But surveys also show that more than 25% of drivers admit to doing it.²
- It is hard to do two things at once and research has shown that if you are using your mobile phone while driving you are four times more likely to have a crash.
- In fact if you use any type of mobile phone (**hands-free or hand-held**) while driving, your reaction times are worse than if you drive under the influence of alcohol.

Tests have shown that reaction times for drivers using a hand-held phone were 30% worse than for driving while drunk. They were nearly 50% worse than when driving under normal conditions.³

This is all reflected in the growing number of news stories about serious accidents caused by drivers who were not able to concentrate on the road, because they were using a mobile phone.

How does the law apply?

While driving, you will be breaking the law if you pick up or use any type of phone that is, or must be, held to operate it. For example, this means you may not use your mobile phone:

- when you are stopped at traffic lights;
- when you are queuing in traffic;
- to receive calls, pictures, text messages or to access the Internet.

If you are an employer, you can be prosecuted if you require employees to make or receive calls while driving.

² Think! Tracking Research 2003
³ Direct Line Mobile Phone Report 2002

Are there any exceptions?

- Yes – a driver may call 999 or 112 in response to a genuine emergency when it is unsafe or impractical to stop to make the call.
- Two-way radios are not covered by this offence but other devices for sending or receiving data are included if they are held while driving. (eg. Personal Digital Assistants).

The best advice is to switch off before you drive off.

- When driving you should use voicemail, a message service or call diversion so you can pick up messages later.
- Only use your phone after you have stopped in a safe place. But never stop on the hard shoulder of a motorway except in an emergency.
- Avoid taking calls even on a hands-free phone while driving. They can be just as distracting. If you must answer, say you are driving and end the conversation. Otherwise you will put yourself and other road users at risk.

We are all responsible for safety on the roads. If you make a call to someone and realise they are driving, stop the call and arrange to speak to them later. You cannot see the hazards or judge the road conditions while you're talking to a driver. And you wouldn't want to distract the driver if you were in the car.



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**For further information on the mobiles
legislation visit www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk**

Or contact your local Road Safety Officer.

Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained from www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/

or by calling 0870 1226 236 and quoting ref: T/INF/885.

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