

Mobile phone use while driving is one of the most prevalent and dangerous factors leading to distracted driving and accidents. Interacting with phones while driving requires drivers to use their cognitive and physical ability, resulting in decreased driving performance and safety.

The most common crash types that result from mobile phone usage are "rear end collision" and "run off the road". Research indicates that using a mobile phone significantly increases the driver's risk in being involved in an accident.

How do mobile phones distract drivers?

- **Visually** – Taking your eyes off the road for two seconds more than doubles the risk of being involved in an accident.
- **Auditory** – Mobile phones require the drivers attention and concentration during conversations which draws attention away from focusing on driving safely.
- **Physically** – Drivers may remove one or both hands off the steering wheel to interact with a mobile phone.
- **Cognitively** – The driver's state of mind is focused on mobile phone use or conversation and not operating the vehicle.

Mobile phone usage and the law

- In Australia, it is illegal to physically operate a mobile phone in your hand, resting on your leg, between your shoulder and ear or any other part of your body while driving. Drivers caught using a mobile could receive large fines and loss of demerits point with mobile phone detection cameras being rolled out across Australia.
- Physically holding a phone when your vehicle is stationary but not parked (e.g. stopped at lights or stuck in traffic) is also illegal.
- In most states in Australia, a full license driver may use the phone to make or receive an audio call (not video) if the phone is secured to the vehicle in a commercially manufactured phone holder that does not obscure the drivers vision or paired with the vehicle hands-free feature e.g. Bluetooth.
- Learner, P1 and P2 drivers are not permitted to use a phone including hands-free while driving or stationary.
- Emergency vehicles, police vehicles or other special vehicles may be exempt from mobile phone usage laws.

What effects does mobile phone usage have on driving performance?

- Slower reaction time – studies show drivers react 20-40% slower when compared to undistracted drivers.
- Difficulty keeping within the lane - while sending or reading text messages, drivers leave the lane up to 28% more.
- Reduced awareness from surroundings – cognitive as well as visual distraction while using a mobile phone reduces a driver's ability to notice relevant roadside information, such as approaching hazards.
- Increased stopping distance.
- Less controlled or harsh braking.
- Mobile phone use requires greater mental exertion.

Tips for staying safe

- If you need to make an urgent call, pull over if safe to do so and park the vehicle before using your phone
- Turn 'do not disturb' mode on prior to starting your journey if possible or utilise voicemail and return calls when you reach your destination
- Plan breaks in your trips to contact colleagues and advise them not to call when you know you will be driving
- Never read or send text messages while driving
- If you do have to take a call using a hands-free:
 - Keep conversations short
 - Avoid complex or emotional conversations
 - Advise callers you are driving
 - Only use hands-free devices in low traffic
 - Avoid calls in heavy traffic
- Remember: Hands free does not mean risk free.

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