

CAPITOL RESEARCH

● ● ● PUBLIC SAFETY POLICY

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING IN 2016

In 2007, Washington became the first state to ban texting while driving. Nine years later, 46 states and the District of Columbia have passed bans.

- In 46 states, texting while driving is banned for all drivers. In 41 states plus the District of Columbia, texting while driving has primary enforcement. That is, an officer may cite a driver for texting while driving without any other traffic offense taking place. In five states (Florida, Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota) enforcement is secondary.¹
- Laws in 14 states and the District of Columbia prohibit drivers from using hand-held cell phones at all while driving. All of those laws have primary enforcement.
- Only four states—Arizona, Missouri, Montana and Texas—have not passed a texting ban for all drivers. Two of those states—Arizona and Montana—have no ban at all for drivers while Missouri and Texas have passed bans on texting while driving for novice drivers.²
- According to a survey by the Governors Highway Safety Association, states have taken significant steps to curb texting while driving in recent years: text messaging bans for all drivers grew by 62 percent from 2010 to 2016 (29 states plus the District of Columbia had a ban in 2010 while 46 states plus the District of Columbia have a ban in 2016).³
- Nearly every state (48 and the District of Columbia) collect data on distracted driving, including at least one category for distraction on police crash report forms. The two states that currently do not collect distracted crash data are Connecticut and New Hampshire.

Driver distraction is a leading factor in many crashes and texting is one of the most common distractions.

- Drivers' eyes are off the road an average of five seconds when texting. At 55 mph, that's the equivalent of traveling the length of a football field while blindfolded.⁴



- In 2014, 3,179 people were killed—10 percent of all crash fatalities—and an estimated 431,000 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes. That's the equivalent of more than eight people killed and 1,180 people injured every day.⁵
- Texting while driving increases the risk of a crash or near-crash by two times over nondistracted driving.⁶
- Ten percent of all drivers under age 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash.⁷

Despite the risks, many drivers admit to distracted driving and the problem is particularly pervasive for young drivers.

- According to a 2011 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 31 percent of drivers ages 18-64 reported they had read or sent text messages or email messages while driving at least once within the past 30 days.⁸



- A 2015 distracted driving survey by Erie Insurance reported that one-third of drivers admitted to texting and driving and three-quarters said they've seen others do it. The survey reported that drivers do all sorts of dangerous things behind the wheel including brushing teeth and changing clothes.⁹
- A number of studies have found teenagers frequently text and drive. The University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute reported 25 percent of teenagers respond to a text message once or more every time they drive.¹⁰
- In 2009, a Pew study reported 40 percent of teenagers say they have been in a car when the driver used a cell phone in a way that put people in danger.¹¹
- According to the Federal Communications Commission, 11 percent of drivers ages 18–20 who were involved in an automobile accident and survived admitted they were sending or receiving texts when they crashed.¹²



Jennifer Burnett, Director, Fiscal & Economic Development Policy,
jburnett@csg.org

REFERENCES

¹ Governor's Highway Safety Association, "Distracted Driving Laws," June 2016, http://ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html

² Ibid.

³ Governor's Highway Safety Association, "Distracted Driving Survey of the States," July 17, 2013, <http://www.ghsa.org/html/publications/survey/distracted2013.html>

⁴ Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, "Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations," September 2009, <http://www.distraction.gov/downloads/pdfs/driver-distraction-commercial-vehicle-operations.pdf>

⁵ National Center for Statistics and Analysis, "2014 Crash Data Key Findings," November 2015, <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812219.pdf>

⁶ Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, "The Impact of Hand-Held and Hands-Free Cell Phone Use on Driving Performance and Safety-Critical Event Risk - Final Report," April 2013, <http://www.vtti.vt.edu/featured/052913-cellphone.html>

⁷ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Traffic Safety Facts: Distracted Driving 2013," April 2015, http://www.distraction.gov/downloads/pdfs/Distracted_Driving_2013_Research_note.pdf

⁸ The Centers for Disease Control, "Distracted Driving," http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/distracted_driving/

⁹ Erie Insurance, "Survey finds texting while driving varies by gender, region, age," March 2015, <https://www.erieinsurance.com/about-us/newsroom/press-releases/2015/distracted-driving>

¹⁰ University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute, "Do as I say, not as I do: distracted driving behavior of teens and their parents," December 2015, <http://www.umtri.umich.edu/our-results/publications/do-i-say-not-i-do-distracted-driving-behavior-teens-and-their-parents>

¹¹ The Pew Research Center, "Teens and Distracted Driving: Texting, talking and other uses of the cell phone behind the wheel," November 2009, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2009/11/16/teens-and-distracted-driving/>

¹² Federal Communications Commission, "The Dangers of Texting While Driving," January 2013, <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/texting-while-driving>

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING BANS

State	Ban on All Drivers	Primary Enforcement	Secondary Enforcement	Crash Data
Alabama	Yes	Yes		Yes
Alaska	Yes	Yes		Yes
Arizona		No Ban		Yes
Arkansas	Yes	Yes		Yes
California	Yes	Yes		Yes
Colorado	Yes	Yes		Yes
Connecticut	Yes	Yes		
Delaware	Yes	Yes		Yes
District of Columbia	Yes	Yes		Yes
Florida	Yes		Yes	Yes
Georgia	Yes	Yes		Yes
Hawaii	Yes	Yes		Yes
Idaho	Yes	Yes		Yes
Illinois	Yes	Yes		Yes
Indiana	Yes	Yes		Yes
Iowa	Yes		Yes	Yes
Kansas	Yes	Yes		Yes
Kentucky	Yes	Yes		Yes
Louisiana	Yes	Yes		Yes
Maine	Yes	Yes		Yes
Maryland	Yes	Yes		Yes
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes		Yes
Michigan	Yes	Yes		Yes
Minnesota	Yes	Yes		Yes
Mississippi	Yes	Yes		Yes
Missouri		Limited to drivers age <21		Yes
Montana		No Ban		Yes
Nebraska	Yes		Yes	Yes
Nevada	Yes	Yes		Yes
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes		
New Jersey	Yes	Yes		Yes
New Mexico	Yes	Yes		Yes
New York	Yes	Yes		Yes
North Carolina	Yes	Yes		Yes
North Dakota	Yes	Yes		Yes
Ohio	Yes		Yes	Yes
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes		Yes
Oregon	Yes	Yes		Yes
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes		Yes
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes		Yes
South Carolina	Yes	Yes		Yes
South Dakota	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tennessee	Yes	Yes		Yes
Texas		Limited to drivers age <18 (Primary), all drivers in school zones and for bus drivers with passengers age <17		Yes
Utah	Yes	Yes		Yes
Vermont	Yes	Yes		Yes
Virginia	Yes	Yes		Yes
Washington	Yes	Yes		Yes
West Virginia	Yes	Yes		Yes
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes		Yes
Wyoming	Yes	Yes		Yes
Totals	46 + D.C.	41 + D.C.	5	48 + D.C.

Data Source: Governors Highway Safety Association, "Distraction Driving Laws," June 2016, http://ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html