

CAPITOL FACTS & FIGURES

TRANSPORTATION

Texting While Driving

In 2007, Washington became the first state to ban texting while driving. Seven years later, 43 states and the District of Columbia have passed similar bans.

- In 43 states, texting while driving is banned for all drivers. In 39 states, 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, enforcement is secondary.¹
- Only seven states—Arizona, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas—have not passed a ban for all drivers. Four of those states—Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas—have passed bans on texting while driving for novice drivers.²
- According to a survey by the Governors Highway Safety Association, 47 states and the District of Columbia reported taking steps to educate the public about the threat of distracted driving in 2012, up from 37 states and the district in 2010.³

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

- Your 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 2012, 3,328 people were killed and an estimated 421,000 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes.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 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.
- 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.⁹
- According to the Federal Communications Commission, 11 percent of drivers ages 18 to 20 who were involved in an automobile accident and survived admitted they were sending or receiving texts when they crashed.¹⁰



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REFERENCES

¹Governors Highway Safety Association, "Distracted Driving Laws," April 2014, http://ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html

²Ibid.

³Governors Highway Safety Association, "Distracted Driving Survey of the States," July 17, 2013, http://www.ghsa.org/html/publications/pdf/survey/2013_distraction.pdf

⁴Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, "Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations," September 2009, <http://www.distraction.gov/research/PDF-Files/Driver-Distraction-Commercial-Vehicle-Operations.pdf>

⁵The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "What is Distracted Driving?"

<http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html>

⁶Virginia 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>

⁷The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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

⁹The 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/>

¹⁰Federal Communications Commission, "The Dangers of Texting While Driving," January 2013, <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/texting-while-driving>

STATE LAWS: BAN ON TEXTING WHILE DRIVING, 2014

State	Ban on All Drivers	Primary Enforcement	Secondary Enforcement
Alabama	Yes	Yes	
Alaska	Yes	Yes	
Arizona		No Ban	
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	
California	Yes	Yes	
Colorado	Yes	Yes	
Connecticut	Yes	Yes	
Delaware	Yes	Yes	
District of Columbia	Yes	Yes	
Florida	Yes		Yes
Georgia	Yes	Yes	
Hawaii	Yes	Yes	
Idaho	Yes	Yes	
Illinois	Yes	Yes	
Indiana	Yes	Yes	
Iowa	Yes		Yes
Kansas	Yes	Yes	
Kentucky	Yes	Yes	
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	
Maine	Yes	Yes	
Maryland	Yes	Yes	
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	
Michigan	Yes	Yes	
Minnesota	Yes	Yes	
Mississippi	Limited to learner or provisional license holders and school bus drivers		
Missouri	Limited to drivers age <21		
Montana		No Ban	
Nebraska	Yes		Yes
Nevada	Yes	Yes	
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes	
New Jersey	Yes	Yes	
New Mexico	Yes	Yes	
New York	Yes	Yes	
North Carolina	Yes	Yes	
North Dakota	Yes	Yes	
Ohio	Yes		Yes
Oklahoma	Limited to learner or provisional license holders and school bus drivers		
Oregon	Yes	Yes	
Pennsylvania	Yes	Yes	
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes	
South Carolina		No Ban	
South Dakota	Yes		Yes
Tennessee	Yes	Yes	
Texas	Limited to drivers age <18 (Primary), all drivers in school zones and for bus drivers with passengers age <17		
Utah	Yes	Yes	
Vermont	Yes	Yes	
Virginia	Yes	Yes	
Washington	Yes	Yes	
West Virginia	Yes	Yes	
Wisconsin	Yes	Yes	
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	
Totals	43 States + D.C.	39 States + D.C.	5 States

Data Source: Governors Highway Safety Association, "Distracted Driving Laws," April 2014, http://ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html