

# PHONES DOWN IT'S THE LAW



As of April 4, 2023, it is illegal to use or hold a cell phone or electronic device in your hand, lap, or other parts of the body while driving on Ohio roads. If an officer sees a violation, they can pull you over.

Drivers over 18 years old can make or receive calls via hands-free devices, including:

- ✓ Speakerphone
- ✓ Earpiece
- ✓ Wireless headset
- ✓ Electronic watch
- ✓ Connecting phone to vehicle

In most cases, anything more than a single touch or swipe is against the law.



## CAN I STILL USE BLUETOOTH?

This new law allows drivers over 18 to make or receive phone calls using “hands-free” technology such as Bluetooth or integrated systems within the vehicle, as long as you don’t hold or support the device or manually enter letters, numbers, or symbols. If you must physically manipulate your device, you should pull over to a safe location and park your car before handling.

## WHAT'S OFF LIMITS?

With very few exceptions, anything that involves using, holding, or supporting a device **while driving** is off limits. This could include:



**Dialing a phone number**



**Sending a text message**  
*voice to text is legal via “hands free” method*



**Updating or browsing social media**



**Video calls or FaceTime**



**Browsing the internet**



**Watching videos**  
*GPS/navigational displays are allowed*



**Playing games**

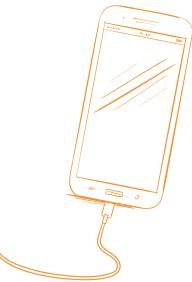


**Recording or streaming video**

Drivers can listen to audio streaming apps and use navigational equipment if they turn them on before getting on the road or use a single touch or swipe to activate, modify, or deactivate them.

Remember, drivers under the age of 18 are still restricted from using their devices in any way, including hands-free features.





## EXCEPTIONS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Drivers reporting an emergency to law enforcement, a hospital, health care provider, fire department, or similar emergency entity.
- ✓ Drivers holding a phone to their ear only during phone conversations, if the call is started or stopped with a single touch or swipe.
- ✓ Drivers holding or using cell phones and other electronic devices while stopped at a traffic light or parked on a road or highway during an emergency or road closure.
- ✓ First responders (law enforcement, fire, EMS) using electronic devices as part of their official duties.
- ✓ Utility workers operating utility vehicles in certain emergency or outage situations.
- ✓ Licensed operators using an amateur radio.
- ✓ Commercial truck drivers using a mobile data terminal.

## KEEP IN MIND — EVEN IF YOU CAN, THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD.

Looking at your cell phone while stopped at a light can potentially endanger your family, friends, and neighbors. Drivers have a responsibility to watch for people crossing the street or other drivers and bicyclists who haven't yet cleared the intersection. Ohioans are counting on you to pay attention.



## ENFORCEMENT

When the new distracted driving law takes effect on April 4, 2023, the Ohio State Highway Patrol and local law enforcement will issue warnings for six months for violations as part of the effort to educate and help motorists adapt to the new law.

Beginning October 5, 2023, law enforcement will start issuing citations for violating this law.

## PENALTIES

### 1<sup>ST</sup> offense

Two points assessed to license, up to a **\$150 fine**.\*

### 2<sup>ND</sup> offense

Three points assessed to license, up to a **\$250 fine**.

### 3+ offenses

Four points assessed to license, up to a **\$500 fine**, possible 90-day suspension of driver license.

### X2

**Fines doubled** if the violation occurs in a work zone.

For more information, visit:  
**PhonesDown.Ohio.gov**

*\*Completion of a distracted driving course can help avoid the fine and points.*