

Anti-Texting Law Facts

Pennsylvania's anti-texting law, effective March 8, 2012, encourages motorists to put their full focus on driving.

What the Law Does

- The law prohibits as a primary offense any driver from using an Interactive Wireless Communication Device (IWCD) to send, read or write a text-based communication while his or her vehicle is in motion.
- Defines an IWCD as a wireless phone, personal digital assistant, smart phone, portable or mobile computer or similar devices that can be used for texting, instant messaging, emailing or browsing the Internet.
- Defines a text-based communication as a text message, instant message, email or other written communication composed or received on an IWCD.
- Institutes a \$50 fine for convictions under this section.
- Makes clear that this law supersedes and preempts any local ordinances restricting the use of interactive wireless devices by drivers.

The penalty is a summary offense with a \$50 fine, plus court costs and other fees.

The violation carries no points as a penalty and will not be recorded on the driver record for non-commercial drivers. It will be recorded on commercial drivers' records as a non-sanction violation.

The texting ban does NOT include the use of a GPS device, a system or device that is physically or electronically integrated into the vehicle, or a communications device that is affixed to a mass transit vehicle, bus or school bus. The law does not authorize the seizure of an IWCD.

Background, Nationwide Perspective

In 2010, there were 13,846 crashes in Pennsylvania where distracted driving played a role.

There were 1,093 crashes statewide where at least one driver used a handheld phone, with 11 people losing their lives in those crashes.

Today there are few individuals without an IWCD (cell phone). Numerous studies indicate that texting drivers typically have their eyes diverted from the road longer than any other distraction. Banning drivers from using any IWCD for text-based communications while operating a motor vehicle will help to ensure that their full attention is on the task of driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nationwide, 35 states, the District of Columbia, and Guam ban text messaging for all drivers. Nine states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands prohibit all drivers from using handheld cell phones while driving.