

Car Phones and Safety

Driving can be difficult enough even when the vehicle operator concentrates completely on the road. But using a car phone while driving can be distracting and potentially dangerous.

Currently, no definitive research has been completed which demonstrates phone use while driving directly results in or contributes to vehicle accidents. However, all distractions, like using a phone, take the driver's concentration off driving, and increase the possibility of an accident.

There are more than 7.5 million mobile phones in use in the United States, according to Industry Trade Association estimates. That figure is expected to grow rapidly as mobile phones become less expensive to own and operate. The increased use of phones in automobiles, vans, recreational vehicles, and trucks requires a renewed emphasis on safe driving practices.

To reduce the likelihood of phone use causing vehicle accidents:

- When purchasing a car phone, consider the type of phone and its ease of operation. Choose a phone equipped for hands-free operation, with a microphone installed in the sunvisor directly above the driver's line of vision.
- Placement of the phone in the vehicle is an important factor. The handset should be placed for the driver's maximum comfort and convenience. It should be easily accessible and allow the driver to sit and drive normally.

- Become familiar with how to use the phone. Read the User's Manual and practice using the different features.
- Keep both hands on the steering wheel and eyes on the road, using the speaker phone and letting the hand set stay in the cradle, whenever the vehicle is in motion.
- Assess the traffic situation before placing or receiving calls. The driver should be fully aware of road and vehicle distractions.
- The safe calling method is to dial phone numbers when stopped. In addition, frequently called numbers can be stored within the phone's memory to minimize dialing.
- All traffic signs and signals should be obeyed. Posted speed limits should not be exceeded. If a call must be made while moving, drive in the slow traffic lane. Better still, pull off of the road to complete the call. The ability to pull over into a safe stopping place is especially important if notes have to be taken.
- Don't take written notes when using the phone while driving. Use the voice mail feature on the phone to note phone numbers and other important information.
- Concentrate on safe and defensive driving at all times.

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