

# FACTS ON NEW CELL PHONE AND SEAT BELT LAWS

## Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration

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### Maryland's Cell Phone Use Ban (TR 21-1124.2)

- Effective October 1, 2013, Maryland's cell phone law now prohibits a driver from using a cell phone while a motor vehicle is in motion.
- Law enforcement officers can stop a driver solely for using a cell phone – no other offense is needed.
  - Drivers will receive a fine of up to:
    - \$75 – first offense
    - \$125 – second offense
    - \$175 – third & subsequent offense
- Nationally, 80 percent of vehicle crashes involve some sort of driver inattention.<sup>1</sup>
- On average, more than 30,000 people in Maryland are injured annually as a result of distracted driving crashes.<sup>2</sup>

### Maryland's Seat Belt Law

Effective October 1, 2013 Maryland has a **primary seat belt law for front seat occupants AND a secondary seat belt law for back seat occupants.**

- Tickets can be issued to drivers and front seat passengers even if no other violation is observed.
- Each person that is not buckled up (driver and passenger) may receive a ticket of up to \$50 for not wearing a seatbelt.
- In the case where any passenger under the age of 16 years of age is not buckled up, the driver will receive a ticket for each offense. For instance, if a driver is stopped and not wearing a seat belt, and a passenger under the age of 16 is also not restrained, the driver will receive a \$50 adult seat belt ticket for himself and a \$50 ticket for the passenger.
- Seat belts save lives. Motorists are 75 percent less likely to be killed in a rollover crash if they are buckled up.<sup>3</sup>
- For the period 2007-2011, 68,151 backseat occupants of passenger vehicles were involved in a reported crash in Maryland. Of these, there were 127 fatalities, 75% of which were reported to be unbelted. Additionally, there were 6,243 occupants who sustained a moderate or severe injury. Those who were reported as unbelted were 67% more likely to sustain a moderate to fatal injury.<sup>4</sup>

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1 NHTSA, Distracted Driving and Driver, Roadway, and Environmental Factors

2 University of Maryland, Baltimore - National Study Center for Trauma and EMS

3 NHTSA, 2013 Click it or Ticket Fact Sheet

4 University of Maryland, Baltimore - National Study Center for Trauma and EMS

- Belted drivers were 50% more likely to sustain a moderate to fatal injury as the result of a motor vehicle crash when the occupant seated directly behind them was unbelted as compared to drivers who were seated in front of a belted occupant.<sup>5</sup>

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Park the Phone Before You Drive!** Talking on a cell phone or texting is a leading source of driver distraction.
- **Manage Your Time.** Driving is not the time to talk or text on a cell phone.
- **Drive Defensively.** Just because you don't drive distracted doesn't mean that others won't.
- **Ride Responsibly.** If you are a passenger and a driver is using a handheld cell phone, ask them to pull over or wait until they arrive at the destination. Avoid causing distractions as well.
  
- **Buckle Up Every Time, Day and Night, In Every Seat!**
  - Motorists should buckle up every time they go out, both day and night, and ***in all seating positions.***
  - Wearing a seat belt is your best defense against unsafe drivers. Buckling up is the single most important step you can take to save your life in the event of a crash.
  - Law enforcement agencies across Maryland are prepared to ticket anyone not buckled up...no warnings and no excuses.
  
- **Set a good example!**
  - Children and young drivers model adult behavior. Adults who use a handheld cell phone while driving or who don't buckle up are sending children the message that those behaviors are acceptable.

# DISTRACTED DRIVING



## **Distracted driving is a factor in 1 out of 4 crashes nationally.\***

### **What is distracted driving?**

Distracted driving is the presence of anything that can distract a driver's physical and mental attention away from driving.

According to a research study published in 2006 by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involve some form of driver inattention within three seconds before the event. The study also identified inattention as the main contributing factor of 93 percent of all rear-end crashes.

Distracted driving continues to be a significant and growing problem within the state of Maryland and throughout the nation. Each year, on average, nearly 70 people in Maryland die and 20,000 people are injured in crashes related to distracted or inattentive driving. More striking is the fact that 38 percent of all traffic injuries in Maryland involve a distracted driver. (Maryland State Highway Administration)

Distractions can be classified as three different types: physical, cognitive and mental. The list of contributing factors of a distracted driving related crash is endless.

### **What are some of the contributing factors?**

- Creating or reading text messages
- Using a cell phone
- Applying lip stick
- Using a shaver
- Changing the radio station
- Using an MP3 player
- Attending to a child
- Distracted by a passenger
- Reading the newspaper
- Eating or drinking
- Checking voicemail
- Using a GPS device

## Some interesting facts:

- Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) extends a driver's reaction as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of **.08 percent**. (University of Utah)
- The **No. 1** source of driver inattention is use of a wireless device. (Virginia Tech/NHTSA)
- Drivers that use cell phones are **four times** as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (NHTSA, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by **37 percent**. (Carnegie Mellon)

## How do we reduce distracted driving?



The obvious way to reduce distracted driving crashes is to convince or require drivers to pay attention to their driving. This is a very difficult goal. Many drivers consider some distractions, such as eating or drinking, listening to the radio, or talking on a cell phone, to be important and common activities and are likely to give them up. Among the menu of options currently being utilized to address distracted driving include environmental (i.e., rumble strips), vehicular (i.e., blue-tooth technology), and regulatory (i.e. manufacturer mandates for seat belt warning), and behavioral (i.e. education).

The Partnership for a Safer Maryland is working to develop a diverse set of behavioral countermeasures to combat distracted driving.

\*This statistic is from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. (NHTSA)

For More Information or to join the Partnership for a Safer Maryland, visit:  
[www.safermaryland.org](http://www.safermaryland.org)