



NW Insurance Council

Consumer Alert

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Release Date: 06-29-2020

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New Idaho distracted driving law starts on July 1 – what drivers need to know

SEATTLE, June 29, 2020 – Are you ready to be “hands-free” while driving in Idaho?

No, we don’t mean “no hands on the wheel,” while driving – we recommend you use both hands for that. But on July 1, a tougher distracted driving law with increased penalties will go into effect in Idaho. To stay safe and avoid a collision or a traffic ticket, it’s important to know what the new law prohibits and what it will cost if you’re ticketed for a distracted driving violation.

Under the new law ([SB 1314](#)), Idaho drivers will only be able to use cell phones and electronic devices in hands-free mode, even while stopped in traffic or at a red light or stop sign. Law enforcement will issue warnings between July 1 and December 31, 2020 and will begin issuing distracted driving tickets on January 1, 2021.

“Insurers have seen a dramatic increase in auto collisions, injuries and claims that are the result of distracted driving, so we’re pleased that Idaho has joined other states like

Oregon and Washington passing a tough, new distracted driving law,” said Kenton Brine, NW Insurance Council president. “We know these laws send an important message to drivers to keep their eyes, hands and minds focused on driving instead of on their devices while behind the wheel.”

The [Idaho Department of Transportation](#) reports that 241 people were killed in distracted driving crashes statewide between 2014 and 2018.

Here’s what the distracted driving bill allows and does not allow, and how much it will cost if a driver is cited for disobeying the new law:

Not Allowed

- Drivers may not use hand-held cell phones or other electronics, such as tablets, laptops, games and other hand-held devices, while they are driving. That means no texting, reading messages, scrolling social media sites or talking on the phone with the device in hand.
- Drivers may not use hand-held cell phones or other electronic devices while stopped in traffic or at a stop sign or stop light.
- No viewing videos or using cameras while driving.

Allowed

- Drivers can use hand-held devices when they are legally parked or legally pulled to the side of or off the road.
- Drivers can use their electronic device if they are contacting emergency services.
- Hands-free use, through Bluetooth or headset for example, is allowed.
- Drivers can use an electronic device so long as it’s hands-free (mounted on a dashboard cradle, for example) and can be started using a single touch or voice command to activate a program, such as a GPS.

Fines

- Using a handheld device while driving is considered a **primary offense** under the new law, which means a law enforcement officer can “pull over” and cite a driver solely for violating the distracted driving law.
- The first ticket for a distracted driving offense will cost at least \$75.00. A second ticket within three years will cost at least \$150 and a third and subsequent offenses will cost at least \$300.00. Also, a court may suspend a person’s driver’s license for up to 90 days for a third offense.
- While a first distracted driving violation that does not involve an accident can’t be used by insurers to determine eligibility or rates, or be considered as “violation points” on a driving record, motor vehicle accidents caused by distracted driving, or any subsequent violations may be included on a driver’s record and be considered by auto insurance companies.

While individual insurance companies weigh rating factors differently, loss costs – payments made to treat injuries, repair damage to vehicles and property and defend insured drivers in legal actions – are typically reflected in premiums paid by consumers. To help manage your insurance costs and avoid a crash, always keep your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road and your mind on driving while behind the wheel.

For more information about distracted driving and auto insurance, contact NW Insurance Council at 800-664-4942 or visit www.nwinsurance.org.

NW Insurance Council is a nonprofit, insurer-supported organization providing information about home, auto and business insurance to consumers, media and public policymakers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

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