

Use of mobile phone in the car

Three out of five drivers use a mobile phone while driving. Of those people, more than one third talks on the phone only occasionally and every fourth less than five minutes a day. However, risks relate also to moderate use; observing of traffic is usually compromised which increases the chances of an accident. The law bans the use of mobile phone without a hands-free device.

According to the law, one can not use a radio or television, or any other sound or picture reproduction device or a communication device during drive, if this activity has a negative effect on the driving performance. The law applies also to bicyclists.

Negative effect is considered to take place if the steering systems of the vehicle become more difficult to operate or the drivers concentration on traffic is disturbed by the device in some other way.

Driver of an engine-powered vehicle must not use a mobile phone during drive by holding the phone in his/her hand.

During drive, a mobile phone can be used only by utilising hands-free equipment.

Hands-free equipment has not been defined more precisely in the legislation; at least for the time being, the equipment may be fixed or an independent device.

Usage increases accident risk

Talking on the phone during drive increases the risk of an accident four-fold. In Finland, every month over 40 per cent of those drivers using a mobile phone during drive find themselves in a dangerous situation due to phone usage.

According to accident investigation board, there were annually approximately 2.6 fatal accidents which involved talking on the mobile phone during 1991-1999; the comparative figure was 4.8 during 2000-2003.



Focus on driving only

It is characteristic of a mobile phone using driver that the speed of the car does not stay the same, it tends to drop somewhat; also, the car does not always stay strictly within its own lane, but instead swerves a little.

The biggest increase has occurred in the number of dangerous situations where the car has drifted into the central lane or into the right side of the road. Mobile phone usage should be avoided especially during traffic jams or in conditions which are slippery or involve poor visibility. In these situations, the risk of an accident is greater than normal even without the phone use.

Talking on the phone causes less danger, if the conversation is rather simple in nature. Stressful, emotional or important discussions during drive make the driver focus his/her attention on the conversation, thus forgetting to pay attention to driving.

Recommendation

When you drive, you dont call. When it rings, you dont answer. But if for some reason you still choose to call or answer during drive:

- use a hands-free device
- place the phone correctly in the car
- practise using the phone
- use the phone only when there is little traffic and safe conditions
- use number finding and connecting services
- use speed and repeat dials
- say in the beginning of the call that you are driving a car
- keep it short
- avoid stressful conversations

Phone is also a safety device

When used correctly a mobile phone may also enhance safety. It can be used to call for help, to report the delay or to rapidly inform e.g. radio stations about dangerous situations or weather.

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