

Distracted Driving Update:

Recently, the OPP reported that Ontario Distracted Driving law changed to influence drivers to avoid dangerous and distracted driving practices.

What's New?

As of January 1, 2019, the penalties for driving with a hand-held wireless communication device (a portion of distracted driving) have increased for motorists in Ontario:

- Fine increases to \$615 or up to \$1,000 in court
- 3 demerit points for a first offence
- 3 day licence suspension
- Possible vehicle towing and storage charges
- Penalties rise for subsequent convictions

Novice drivers (G1, G2, M1 or M2) with distracted driving get the same fines, and longer licence suspensions.

Additional Details ...

Ontario's distracted driving laws apply to the use of hand-held communication/entertainment devices and certain display screens.

While you are driving, including when you are stopped in traffic or at a red light, it is illegal to:

- use a phone or other hand-held wireless communication device to text or dial – you can only touch a device to call 911 in an emergency
- use a hand-held electronic entertainment device, such as a tablet or portable gaming console
- view display screens unrelated to driving, such as watching a video
- program a GPS device, except by voice commands

You are allowed to use hands-free wireless communications devices with an earpiece, lapel button or Bluetooth. You can view GPS display screens as long as they are built into your vehicle's dashboard or securely mounted on the dashboard.

Other actions such as eating, drinking, grooming, smoking, reading and reaching for objects are not part of Ontario's distracted driving law. However, you can still be charged with careless or dangerous driving.

Remember, **simply holding a phone or other device while driving is against the law.**

You can use:

- a hands-free device (e.g. Bluetooth) but only to turn it on/off. You must use voice dialing. No other actions like dialing or scrolling are allowed.
- a mounted device (e.g. phone, GPS) as long as it is secure – not moving around while driving. You must input the required information before driving.

Tips to avoid distracted driving:

- turn off your phone or switch it to silent mode before you get in the car; put it in the glove compartment (lock it, if you have to) or in a bag on the back seat
- before you leave the house, record an outgoing message that tells callers you're driving and you'll get back to them when you're off the road; some apps can block incoming calls and texts, or send automatic replies to people trying to call or text
- ask a passenger to take a call or respond to a text for you; if you must respond, or have to make a call or send a text, carefully pull over to a safe area
- silence notifications that tempt you to check your phone

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