



THINK - Mobile Phones

Switch off before you drive off



The Law

It is illegal to use a hand held mobile phone whilst driving, even when your vehicle is stationary. You can also be prosecuted for using a hands-free device if you do not have control of your vehicle.

New legislation will come in to effect on 27 February 2007. The current fine of £30 will increase to £60, with the addition of three penalty points to your licence. If the case goes to court, the fine can increase to £1,000 - or £2,500 for drivers of buses, coaches, vans and lorries.

Although Government surveys show that 92% of drivers agree with the law on mobile phones, an Alphabet survey in December 2006 found that less than 20% of business drivers obeyed it.

Drivers who use hands-free kits are not exempt from potential penalties. If the Police see that you are not in control of your vehicle or you seem distracted while using a hands-free phone, they can impose a fixed penalty of a £60 fine and three points on your licence.

Companies can be prosecuted if they require employees to use their mobile whilst on the road. The regulations apply to "anyone who causes or permits any other person" to use a hand-held mobile phone while driving. Employers would not be liable just because they supplied a telephone or because they phoned an employee who was driving.

However, employers would probably be liable if they required their employees to use a hand-held phone while driving. They might also be liable if they failed to forbid employees to use such phones on company business.

Remember, do not use mobile phones:

- While stuck in traffic
- While stopped at traffic lights
- To receive calls, text messages or access the internet whilst in control of a vehicle
- When supervising a learner driver - your concentration should be on the road

Why?

Research shows that if you are using a mobile phone whilst driving, you are four times more likely to have an accident.

You have slower reaction times whilst driving using a mobile phone, even hands-free, than if you were driving under the influence of alcohol. Reaction times are 50% slower when compared to normal driving when using a mobile and 30% slower when compared to being under the influence.

Exceptions

- If a driver is using their mobile phone to call 999 or 112 for the emergency services
- Two way radios are not included under this legislation, but other hand held devices are, for example a PDA or BlackBerry
- Satellite Navigation equipment does not come under this legislation unless it is hand-held, in which case the same rules apply as mobile phones
- If you are stuck in exceptional traffic jams for a long period of time (such as on the motorway); and if it is clear that you are not driving and the engine is switched off

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