



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Office of the Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ban on texting while driving takes effect Thursday

Ban extends to cell phone use for 16- and 17-year-old drivers

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 14, 2010) – Governor Steve Beshear’s ongoing effort to make Kentucky roads safer takes a big step on Thursday, July 15, when a new law takes effect to ban texting for all drivers and cell phone use for drivers under 18.

Kentucky recorded more than 57,000 crashes last year – and more than 200 fatalities – attributed to driver distraction and inattention.

“I was proud to support and sign this law into effect, and strongly believe this will further our efforts to reduce fatalities on Kentucky roadways,” Gov. Beshear said. “Safety is a top priority of my administration, and this law will help increase awareness of the dangers of texting while driving and encourage drivers to stay focused on the road.”

The law bans texting for drivers of all ages while the vehicle is in motion. For drivers over 18, it allows the use of global positioning devices and reading, selecting or entering a telephone number or name for the purpose of making a phone call. Texting is allowed only to report illegal activity or to request medical or emergency aid.

“We are convinced that this new law will save lives,” said Acting Transportation Secretary Mike Hancock. “The message to drivers is to eliminate distractions and stay focused on the road. Driving a motor vehicle requires your undivided attention.”

For drivers under 18, use of all personal communication devices such as cell phones and pagers is not allowed while the vehicle is in motion. The use of a global positioning system is allowed, but manually entering information must be completed while the vehicle is stopped. Emergency and public safety vehicles are exempt when the use of a personal communication device is essential to the operator's official duties.

In December 2009, Gov. Beshear launched his Eyes on the Road effort --an executive order prohibiting text messaging by state employees who are driving government-owned vehicles. In April 2010, Gov. Steve Beshear signed the law banning texting for all drivers and cell phone use for drivers under 18.

Law enforcement officers will issue warnings until Jan. 1, 2011. On or after Jan. 1, violators will be liable for fines of \$25 on a first offense and \$50 on each subsequent offense.

"Even though our total number of fatalities for 2009 was less than 2008, those killed in crashes resulting in distraction, inattention and cell phone use increased," said Chuck Geveden, executive director of the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety. "This legislation is sure to save lives, prevent injuries and cut down on crashes across Kentucky."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving distracted drivers, and more than a half million were injured. Inexperienced drivers under 20 years old have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.

Information on distracted driving is at <http://highwaysafety.ky.gov/>.

[MEDIA NOTE: *The Kentucky Office of Highway Safety has a distracted-driving simulator – the “D2 Simulator” – that is available for your use from 10 a.m. to noon on Thursday, July 15. The simulator will be located in the food center adjacent to the cafeteria at KYTC headquarters, 200 Mero Street, in Frankfort.*]

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