

# Ohio's Cellphone-Use & Texting-While-Driving Laws

Read about Ohio's distracted driving laws and the costs of a violation.

Ohio's distracted driving laws generally ban texting-while-driving for all motorists and talking on a cellphone for only certain drivers. This article discusses the specifics of what the law prohibits and the costs and other consequences of a violation.

## Talking on a Cellphone

For most Ohio motorists, there are no restrictions on talking on a cellphone while driving.

However, for motorists who are under the age of 18 and driving with a temporary instruction permit or probationary license all wireless device use while driving is prohibited. In other words, the prohibition means no texting and no talking on a cellphone for these underage drivers.

**Exceptions.** Ohio's wireless-device-use ban on underage drivers doesn't apply when a device is used by a person:

- for emergency purposes
- who's vehicle is parked outside a lane of traffic, or
- using a navigation system in voice-operated or hands-free mode.

**Penalties.** For a first violation of the underage wireless-device-use law, there's a \$150 fine and 60-day license suspension. Second violations carry \$300 in fines and a one-year license suspension.

## Text Messaging

Ohio's distracted driving law prohibits all motorists from using a handheld wireless communication device to write, send, or read a text-based communication while driving.

**Handheld wireless communication devices.** The distracted driving law defines "handheld wireless communication device" as any wireless telephone, text-messaging device, personal digital assistant, computer, laptop, tablet, or similar wireless device designed or used for text communications.

Exceptions. Ohio's texting-while-driving law contains a number of exceptions. These exceptions include using a device:

- for emergency purposes
- while parked outside a lane of traffic
- to read, select, or enter a name for the purpose of making or receiving a call
- to receive navigation or safety-related information (like weather or traffic alerts)
- for navigation purposes, or
- in hands-free or voice-operated mode.

Penalties. A texting-while-driving violation is a minor misdemeanor in Ohio. A conviction carries a maximum \$100 fine.

Depending on the circumstances, a texting violation could also lead to a reckless driving conviction. And if a texting offense results in the death of another person, vehicular manslaughter charges are a possibility.