
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

FINAL COUNTDOWN TO CELLPHONE BAN WHILE DRIVING

VANCOUVER – B.C. drivers have just 11 days to change their driving behaviours and comply with new cellphone rules to enhance road safety in the province, Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Kash Heed said today.

“Making B.C. roads safer was an easy call,” said Heed. “Now, we’re asking the public to get on board and abide by the new rules. To help raise awareness for drivers, we are rolling out a public education campaign in conjunction with police enforcement of this law to reduce distracted driving across the province.” Heed also noted that in the new year, highway signs warning motorists not to drive using hand-held devices will also begin to appear along B.C. roads at major international border crossings and airports.

An informal 30-minute survey by ICBC of motorists at the intersection on Denman and Georgia streets last week during the morning commute found 116 motorists talking or texting while driving.

Heed kicked off the countdown to new distracted driving rules at the same intersection today. He was joined by Vancouver Police chief constable Jim Chu and Gordon Hogg, MLA for Surrey-White Rock.

Under changes to the Motor Vehicle Act introduced by government last fall that take effect on Jan. 1, 2010, drivers will be allowed to use only hands-free cellphones and devices that require only one touch to activate. As of Feb. 1, a driver talking on a hand-held phone or electronic device will be subject to a fine of \$167. In addition, drivers caught texting or emailing will be subject to three penalty points.

For new drivers in the Graduated Licensing Program (GLP), there will be a full ban on all cellphone and electronic devices, including hands-free. A recently released report entitled ‘Teens and Distracted Driving’ by Washington D.C.-based Pew Research found that of those teens 16 to 17 years of age who own a cell phone or text regularly, more than half have talked on a cellphone while driving, and one in three has texted while driving.

“Police chiefs in British Columbia support the new rules,” said Chu. “This legislation provides Vancouver police with a valuable tool to improve road safety and better protect everyone on our streets. Since driving is a full-time activity, distracted and inattentive drivers will be subject to both education and enforcement by the VPD in our efforts to improve safety for all road users.”

To abide by the new law, licensed drivers can use hands-free technology that is activated by a single touch to a button or, when it is safe to do so, pull over and stop their vehicle before they talk or email.

Police, fire and ambulance personnel who may need to make calls in the performance of their duties, and motorists who need to call 9-1-1 are exempt from the legislation. The use of two-way radios for commercial or industrial vehicles will be permitted.

Details on what is permitted and what is prohibited under the legislation is at:
<http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/osmv/publications/index.htm>.

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