

HANDS FREE MINNESOTA

What can I do under the new law?

The new law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, *but only by voice commands or single touch activation without holding the phone*. Remember, hands free is not necessarily distraction free.

What can't I do with my phone under the new law?

You may not hold your phone in your hand. Also, a driver may not use their phone at any time for video calling, video live-streaming, Snapchat, gaming, looking at video or photos stored on the phone, using apps, reading texts and scrolling or typing on the phone.

Can I ever hold my phone?

Yes. Hand-held phone use is allowed to obtain emergency assistance, if there is an immediate threat to life and safety, or when in an authorized emergency vehicle while performing official duties.

Can I use a GPS navigation device?

Yes. GPS and other systems that can only be used for navigation are exempt from the Hands Free law. In-car screens and systems are also exempt. In both cases, most of these systems lock when the vehicle is moving.

Couldn't I get distracted by my in-car screen or other distractions like eating, grooming, pets, passengers or reading a book? Why aren't they covered?

Yes, there are many possible distractions when driving, but cell phone use presents a unique and complex challenge and is addressed by the Hands Free law. A driver is still expected to avoid other distractions and drive with due care under other Minnesota traffic laws.

Are there penalties?

Yes. The first ticket is \$50 plus court fees and the second and later tickets are \$275 plus court fees.

Will this make the roads safer?

Yes, in two ways. In 12 of 15 states with hands free laws, traffic fatalities have decreased by an average of 15 percent [Source: National Safety Council and Insurance Federation based on National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data].

This law will also help law enforcement keep Minnesotans safe. Because drivers aren't allowed to have a phone in their hand, it'll be easier for law enforcement to see violations and take more effective action.

Through public awareness and education, the goal is for Minnesotans to comply with the new law without enforcement action.



How to go Hands Free (from cheapest to most expensive...)

- 1) Don't use your phone when you drive. Put your phone in the glove compartment or trunk or backseat or turn on a "don't-disturb" app and enjoy the drive. It's free and you will be surprised at how many new sites you will see on your drive. A number of large, successful companies have adopted no-phone-use policies while driving on company time and after getting used to it, they report being happier and at least as productive as when they used their phones.
- 2) Use a single earphone that has the microphone and you are hands free. Remember, using earphones in both ears at the same time is illegal in Minnesota.
- 3) Pair your phone to your current car or truck. If your existing vehicle and phone can talk to each other, pair up and go hands free.
- 4) Buy an auxiliary cable and connect your phone's earphone jack to your car's AUX jack. You can operate your phone by voice or single touch and listen through your cars audio system. Auxiliary cables can be purchased for less than \$5.
- 5) If your car is older and doesn't have an AUX jack but has a cassette player, you can buy an adapter that fits into the cassette player that allows you to connect your phone through the earphone jack. The cassette adapters cost about \$30.
- 6) Buy a holder to clip your phone to the dash. You can use it in a voice activated or single-touch mode. Clips can be simple and cheap or complicated. Make sure you get one that holds your phone securely. Prices range from less than \$5 to \$50.
- 7) Buy a Bluetooth speaker or earphone to pair with your phone. There are many after-market choices for both. All of which let you go hands free. Prices are generally in the \$10-\$50.

