
Cell phone safety—driving home the importance

These days, it's hard to find someone who does not have a cell phone. Cell phones can be invaluable for those business professionals who spend a lot of time out of the office, or for anyone who wants the added peace of mind of knowing they can call for help in an emergency.

Are there laws limiting the use of cell phones while driving?

New York state prohibits the use of cell phones while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway. Violators charged for using a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle can face a fine of up to \$100 and three points will be applied to their driving record. Hands-free cell phones, however, are permitted.

Are there laws limiting the use of portable electronic devices used for text messaging or transmitting electronic data while driving?

Effective Nov. 1, 2009, New York state prohibits the use of electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway.

Portable electronic devices include hand-held cell phones, but also include PDAs, laptop computers, pagers, broadband personal communication devices and electronic games. Violators charged for using an electronic device while operating a motor vehicle can face a fine of up to \$150 and three points will be applied to their driving record.

Familiarize yourself with your phone

Be sure you review all the literature that comes with your phone. Understand how to use its many features—including speed dial, re-dial and hands-free options.

Be aware of your surroundings and road conditions

If you find yourself in hazardous driving conditions—whether traffic- or weather-related—let your voicemail system pick up the call. A few minutes of paying attention, and pulling over in a safe location, could make a huge difference in your safety and the safety of those around you.

Stay calm on the phone and on the road

Don't use driving time to engage in stressful or emotional conversations. They can distract you from driving safely and sensibly, even if you are using a hands-free phone.

Cell phones can be an invaluable business tool or your lifeline in a real emergency. But, remember, when you're behind the wheel, your most important responsibility is safe driving.

