

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Policy on Distracted Driving

Distracted Driving

Driver inattention is a leading factor in many crashes, and cell phone use and texting are some of the most common driver distractions. While more and more states and localities are banning specific distractions, GHSA's message to all drivers is: *don't use cell phones or other electronic devices while driving, regardless of the current law.*

State legislatures have responded to the growing concern over cell phone use and texting while driving by passing a variety of new laws, including banning handheld cell phone use or texting by all drivers or restricting cell phone use or texting for a specific demographic, such as teens or school bus drivers.

The federal government has also gotten involved. Last fall, U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood hosted a Distracted Driving Summit. GHSA Chairman Vernon Betkey participated as a panlist. Recently, states have been passing texting bans for all drivers at a frenetic pace. Washington State was the first state to enact a texting ban, in May 2007. GHSA supports texting bans for all drivers, but does have concerns about enforcement. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is working on an enforcement demonstration project which the Association fully supports.

GHSA does not support handheld, only, cell phone bans, as there is no clear indication that hands-free use is any safer than handheld. A Virginia Tech study indicated hands-free systems may be beneficial, while studies from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the University of Utah and Carnegie Mellon have clearly indicated **all** cell phone use is distracting.

GHSA recommends several steps to combat the increasing problem of distracted driving. Specifically:

- The **Federal government** should:
 - Fund research to develop effective methods for enforcing texting and cell phone bans.
 - Fund research to determine the nature and scope of the distracted driving problem.
 - Fund a media campaign to alert the public to the dangers of distracted driving.
 - **Develop model policies for employers encouraging them to ban cell phone use/texting by all employees driving for business purposes.**
 - Provide financial incentives for states that pass comprehensive graduated licensing laws that include cell phone/texting bans for new drivers.
 - Support technological solutions that minimize driver distraction.
- States should:
 - Ban text messaging for all drivers.
 - Ban all non-emergency cell phone use for new drivers, as part of its Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) law, as well as for school bus drivers.
 - Include a category for cell phone/electronic equipment distraction on crash investigation forms.
- The **private sector** should:
 - **Ban cell phone use/texting by all employees driving for business purposes.**

- Develop technical solutions, such as systems that are able to disable specific cell phone functions while a driver is driving.
- Parents should:
 - Use GDL bans as another tool to ensure safe driving practices by their teens.
 - Set a good example for their children by not using a cell phone while driving.

The Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) is the states' voice on highway safety. GHSA represents state and territorial highway safety offices. **Members are appointed by their governors to administer their state's highway safety program.** Areas of focus include occupant protection; impaired driving; speed enforcement; and drowsy, distracted and aggressive driving; motorcycle, pedestrian and bicycle safety; as well as highway safety information systems.

GHSA's mission is to provide leadership in the development of national policy to ensure effective highway safety programs. GHSA's members meet annually to discuss highway safety problems and issues and to adopt policy on highway safety issues of national concern and importance. GHSA policy statements to date were adopted at the Association's meeting in August 2009.

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GHSA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit representing the **state and territorial highway safety offices** that implement programs to address behavioral highway safety issues. Through GHSA leadership, states and territories achieve a reduction in traffic deaths and injuries. GHSA provides leadership and representation for the states and territories to improve traffic safety, influence national policy and enhance program management. Overall, GHSA goals are:

- Establish traffic safety as a national priority
- Expand and deliver member support services
- Strengthen partnerships to achieve GHSA's mission and goals

The following State Highway Safety Offices are members of GHSA: (one's in bold have major DOE sites or operations)

Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
 Alaska Highway Safety Office
 American Samoa Department of Public Safety
 Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety
 Arkansas Highway Safety Office
California Office of Traffic Safety
Colorado Office of Transportation Safety
 Connecticut Transportation Safety Section
 Delaware Office of Highway Safety
D.C. Office of Highway Safety
 Florida State Safety Office
Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety
 Guam Office of Highway Safety
Hawaii Department of Transportation
Idaho Office of Highway Safety
Illinois Division of Traffic Safety
 Indiana Traffic Safety Division

Iowa Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau
Kansas Traffic Safety Section
Kentucky Office of Highway Safety
Louisiana Highway Safety Commission
Maine Bureau of Highway Safety
Maryland Highway Safety Office
Massachusetts Highway Safety Division
Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning
Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety
Mississippi Governor's Office of Highway Safety
Missouri Highway Safety Division
Montana State Highway Traffic Safety Bureau
Nebraska Office of Highway Safety
Nevada Office of Traffic Safety
New Hampshire Highway Safety Agency
New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety
New Mexico Traffic Safety Bureau
New York Governor's Traffic Safety Committee
North Carolina Governor's Highway Safety Program
North Dakota Traffic Safety Office
Northern Mariana Islands Office of Highway Safety
Ohio Traffic Safety Office
Oklahoma Highway Safety Office
Oregon Transportation Safety Division
Pennsylvania Bureau of Highway Safety & Traffic Engineering
Puerto Rico Traffic Safety Commission
Rhode Island Office on Highway Safety
South Carolina Office of Highway Safety
South Dakota Office of Highway Safety
Tennessee Governor's Highway Safety Office
Texas Traffic Safety Section
Utah Highway Safety Office
Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program
Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety
Virginia Highway Safety Office
Washington Traffic Safety Commission
West Virginia Governor's Highway Safety Program
Wisconsin Bureau of Transportation Safety
Wyoming Highway Safety Program