

Mobile phones and distraction



At 60 km/h, if you look at your phone for just two seconds, you travel 33 metres, virtually blind. A short lapse in concentration can have serious consequences.

Driving is a complex task. Anything that takes your mind or eyes off the road, or your hands off the wheel, not only compromises your safety, but that of everyone else on the road. No phone call, email, message or post is worth risking your life or someone else's.

Being distracted increases your chances of having a crash. It slows down your reaction times and it puts you in danger of not seeing other road users, important traffic devices like traffic lights and stop signs, animals or hazards.

What are the rules?

In NSW, using a handheld mobile phone while driving is illegal. A mobile phone can only be used in limited circumstances whilst driving. This table provides the rules on when you can legally use your mobile phone:

The facts

- ▶ In NSW from 2017–2021, there were 109 casualty crashes involving a driver/rider using a handheld mobile phone, resulting in 13 deaths and 163 injuries. Mobile phone use is likely to be underreported in crash data due to the difficulty in obtaining evidence.
- ▶ Taking your eyes off the road for more than two seconds doubles your risk of crashing.
- ▶ Research has found handheld mobile phone use while driving is associated with at least a four-fold increase in the risk of having a casualty crash, and texting increases the crash risk even further.

Use or Function	Unrestricted licence holders	Learner and Provisional (P1 and P2) licence holders
Make or receive audio phone call	Yes, ONLY if the phone is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Secured in a mobile phone holder fixed to the vehicle; or ▶ Can be operated without touching any part of the phone (e.g. Bluetooth controls) 	No
Use music or audio functions		No

Use or Function	Unrestricted licence holders	Learner and Provisional (P1 and P2) licence holders
Use as a driver's aid (for example, navigation, Speed Adviser app or dispatch system)	Yes, ONLY if the phone is secured in a mobile phone holder fixed to the vehicle.	No
Access a Digital Driver Licence	Yes, ONLY after a police officer has asked you to do so.	
Use wallet functions (make a transaction, show a coupon or voucher, or to access an area)	Yes, ONLY if the vehicle is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stationary; and ▶ Off the road (such as in a carpark, driveway or drive-through) 	

All other functions including video calling, texting, social media, web browsing and photography are prohibited. It is also illegal to hold and use a mobile phone at any time while driving or riding. This includes when waiting at traffic lights or stopped in traffic. To legally use a hand-held mobile phone your vehicle must be parked out of the line of traffic.

Enforcement

Mobile phone detection cameras operate across NSW targeting illegal phone use. The program includes both fixed and transportable trailer-mounted cameras. Independent modelling has shown these cameras should prevent around 100 fatal and serious injury crashes over five years.

The penalty for offending drivers in NSW is five demerit points and a substantial fine. The penalty increases to 10 demerit points during double-demerit periods.

How can I stay safe?

Mobile phones

- ▶ Aim to avoid using a mobile phone at all when driving.
- ▶ Pull over somewhere safe and park your vehicle out of the line of traffic if you need to use your phone.
- ▶ Consider using the 'Do not disturb' or 'Do not disturb while driving' function on your phone, or have your calls automatically diverted to voicemail.
- ▶ Put your phone out of sight (for example, in the glovebox) and on silent so it is not a distraction.
- ▶ If driving for work, let your manager and colleagues know not to call you whilst you are driving.
- ▶ If in-car phone use is necessary, put your phone into a mobile phone holder, or connect your phone to the vehicle's Bluetooth.
- ▶ If you call someone and realise they are driving, arrange to call back later.

Other distractions

- ▶ You must not drive with an animal on your lap. It's best to restrain animals either in a safe carrier or strapped into a harness.
- ▶ You must not drive with a visual display unit operating if any part of the screen is visible to you from your normal driving position, unless you are an unrestricted licence holder and it is being used as a driver's aid (for example, navigation or Speed Adviser app) and is either integrated into the vehicle design or is securely mounted to the vehicle.
- ▶ Put objects (such as a bag) out of reach.
- ▶ Drive a car that has the latest safety features such as automatic headlights and windscreen wipers, voice-activated controls for audio, navigation and air conditioning, and a heads-up display.

More information

Visit the Transport for NSW road safety website (roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/mobilephones) for information on driver distraction, for the latest mobile phone rules including penalties, and other important road safety topics.

If you're driving for work, visit the Towards Zero website (towardszero.nsw.gov.au/workplace) to complete the Road safety: Everybody's business online learning course to learn about road safety risk and how you can stay safe on NSW roads.



Scan the QR code for more information on road safety

