

New Mobile Phone Laws

On 27 February, new laws regarding illegal use of mobile phones will come into effect in an effort to stamp out persistent use of hand-held mobile devices whilst driving. The fixed penalty – currently set at £30 – will be doubled and offenders will also receive 3 licence penalty points.

The tougher new penalties have been laid down by Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander who commented: “Research shows that talking on a mobile phone while

driving affects your concentration and ability to react to dangerous situations. It’s quite simple - it’s impossible to do two things at once and do them well. That is why in December 2003 we introduced new laws preventing motorists from driving while using a hand-held mobile.”

There have been a number of research reports identifying the danger of using any mobile phone while driving - for example, TRL Ltd’s report for Direct Line Insurance which demonstrated the activity is even more dangerous than drink driving. The changes to the law relate to the issue of not having proper control of a vehicle - a measure which can also be used where a driver has been distracted by using a hands-free mobile phone.

“We have seen a groundswell of support for this move” added Mt Alexander, “but, worryingly, while 92% of people agree with the law, 21% of drivers admit to breaking it. That is why, from 27 February, the Road Safety Act will introduce a tougher fixed penalty of three points on your licence as well as a £60 fine.”

A campaign to raise awareness of the new fixed penalty began last week and will include radio, press and online activity raising awareness of both the change in penalties and the dangers of using a mobile phone whilst driving. This educational approach goes hand in hand with continued enforcement activity by the police.

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