

Georgia Distracted Driver Bill – HB 637

“Hands-Free Georgia Act”

SUMMARY

Drivers cannot physically touch their phones while driving. Bluetooth and hands-free phone actions are allowed. Drivers can look at the GPS devices but cannot maneuver them while driving. The first fine is \$50.00.

REGULATIONS FOR DRIVERS & DEVICE COMMUNICATION

This bill mandates that a driver cannot:

- Physically hold or support, with any part of their body, a wireless telecommunication device or stand-alone electronic device.
- Write, send, or read any text-based communication, unless it is a navigation device or voice-based text that is converted to a written message.
- Watch a video or movie on a device other than navigation data.
- Record or broadcast on a device, except those devices that record continuously inside or outside the vehicle.
- Engage in any action that will distract the driver.

Commercial drivers cannot:

- Use more than a single button on a wireless communication device to initiate or terminate voice communication.
- Reach for a wireless telecommunication or stand-alone electronic device that would render the driver out of a seated driving position or improperly restrained by a safety belt.

PUNISHMENTS

Each violation is a separate offense resulting in a misdemeanor.

- A first conviction results in a maximum \$50.00 fine.
- A second conviction within 24-months results in a maximum fine of \$100.00.
- A third conviction within 24-months results in a maximum fine of \$150.00.

Anyone appearing in court for the first conviction will not be found guilty if they bring to court a device or proof of purchase of a device that would allow them to comply with regulations in the future. This clemency is only offered once.

EXCEPTIONS

The physical handling of a phone is allowed only:

- To report a traffic accident, medical emergency, fire, an actual or potential criminal or delinquent act, or road condition which causes immediate or serious traffic or safety hazard.
- By a utility service employee or contractor while acting within in the scope of their job for a utility emergency.
- By a law enforcement officer, firefighter, emergency medical service personnel, ambulance driver, or public safety first responder.
- While a vehicle is lawfully parked.

This legislation goes into effect on July 1, 2018.