

Safe Cellphone Use — It's Your Call

SAFETY
tips

ICBC recommends not using your cellphone while driving your car.

According to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, the number of cellphone users in Canada has risen to more than 16 million and while cellphones can be a valuable tool for safety, they can also be a serious distraction that may cause a driver to take unnecessary risks — sometimes with very serious consequences.

But the value of having a cellphone in the event of a road or traffic emergency comes in having the phone available, not necessarily turned on or active.

Many studies have been conducted over the years trying to determine the safety of driving while using a cellphone. And while the actual numbers are difficult to quantify, a study from researchers at the University of Utah from 2006 concludes that talking on a cellphone while driving is as dangerous as drinking and driving — even if the phone is a hands-free model.

ICBC recommends not using your cellphone at all while driving your car. If you find yourself in a situation that absolutely requires the use of a phone, try to remember the following safety tips:

Pull over to make or receive a call

If you must make or receive a call while in your car, pull over to the side of the road as soon as it is safe to do so. Make sure you're safely off the side of the road so you're not posing a danger to other vehicles.

Take a message

Let your voice mail pick up your calls in tricky driving situations. It's easy and much safer to retrieve your messages at a later time.

Let passengers make or receive calls for you

If there are passengers in the vehicle, let them make and receive calls for you. If you are expecting an in-coming call that requires your immediate attention, let your passenger drive.

Consider using a hands-free model

Hands-free does not mean risk-free. However, a hands-free unit allows you to keep both hands on the wheel while you talk on the phone. Attach the microphone to the visor just above your line of vision, so you can keep your eyes on the road.



Never dial while driving

If you must dial manually, do so only when stopped. Pull off the road when it is safe to do so.

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In 2006, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released research showing that the most common distraction for drivers is using a cellphone — but crashes and near-crashes were caused almost equally when dialling as they were when talking or listening. Dialling is more dangerous but occurs less often than talking or listening.

Keep the phone in its holder

Make sure your phone is securely in its holder when you are not using it. That way, it won't pop out and distract you when you are driving.

Don't take notes while driving

If you need to write something down, pull off to the side of the road.

For more information, please contact

- Canadian Safety Council
www.safety-council.org
- Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association
www.focusondriving.ca
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
www.nhtsa.gov
- Transport Canada
www.tc.gc.ca

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