



Indiana Hands-Free Driving Law Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this law needed?

Across the U.S., including Indiana, serious traffic crashes and fatalities have sharply increased in recent years due in large part to distracted driving. Requiring drivers to put smartphones and other devices away and focus on driving is proven to reduce crashes and deaths. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, states that have passed hands-free driving laws have seen a nearly 20 percent decrease in traffic deaths in the two years after passing the law.

Hasn't Indiana had such a law in place for several years? Is this really a new law?

In 2011, Indiana passed a law that prohibited texting while driving. The 2011 law did not address holding a mobile device for other purposes. The texting while driving law presented enforcement challenges for police officers and did not achieve a reduction in crashes caused by distracted driving. The new law is more comprehensive, prohibiting drivers from having a mobile device in hand while their vehicles are moving.

Can I still talk on my phone while driving?

Yes, as long as you are doing so hands-free. You may use a speakerphone, Bluetooth technology, earpiece, headphone or other device that allows for hands-free communication.

Can I hold my phone while driving to dial a number or answer/end a call?

No. Your cell phone should not be in your hands while driving any time your vehicle is moving. The only exception is to call 911 in an emergency. While your vehicle is moving, you should use voice commands to dial your phone or answer/end calls. If you are not able to use voice commands and need to make or receive a call you should pull off the road safely at an appropriate location and bring your vehicle to a complete stop before holding your phone.

My vehicle doesn't have Bluetooth capability. How can I use my phone while driving and not violate the law?

Many retailers offer Bluetooth adapters that can allow smartphones to be used hands-free in vehicles that do not have Bluetooth technology built in.

Can I stop on the shoulder of the road to hold my phone to make a call, text, etc.?

Parking on the shoulder of an interstate is only permitted in an emergency and while it is legal to park on the shoulder in some areas on U.S. highways, state roads and local/county roads, it's not always safe to do so. If you need to use your phone and can't operate it hands free, find a safe place to pull off the road completely, such as a gas station or convenience store.

I rely on my phone for navigation and use apps like Google maps and Waze. How does the law impact using your phone for directions?

Drivers may use mobile devices for turn-by-turn GPS navigation, including apps such as Google Maps and Waze provided they are using the devices hands-free while their vehicles are moving. Mounts and brackets may make it easier to view map applications on mobile devices while maintaining focus on driving.

Can I listen to music, podcasts and streaming audio while driving?

Yes. As long as the mobile device being used to play music or other audio is being used in a hands-free manner.

Does the law only apply to phones?

No. The hands-free law applies to electronic communications devices which includes cell phones, tablets and smart-watches. However, smart watches may be used while driving as a conventional watch to check time. Amateur radio, two-way radio and citizens band (CB) may be used under the hands-free law, but drivers are required to do so in a safe manner.

Why aren't other potential distractions such as car stereos, infotainment systems, eating while driving, etc. included in the hands-free law?

Drivers should strive to keep everyone safe by avoiding all types of distractions while driving. With that said, holding a smartphone or tablet while driving is a significant factor in crashes caused by distracted driving. In addition to the new hands-free law, many other traffic laws in Indiana code require drivers to operate vehicles safely and responsibly.

What is the penalty for a driver caught with a phone in hand while driving?

Holding a phone or other mobile device in hand while driving, with the exception of an emergency, may result in a Class C infraction and subject a driver to a fine.. Points may also be assessed against the driver's license. Since the law is new in Indiana, Indiana State Police and local law enforcement will be emphasizing education and enforcement during the initial period the law is in effect. Police will offer warnings and educate drivers on the new law. Points against drivers' licenses will not be assessed until July 2021 at the earliest.

