

On April 12, 2019, Governor Tim Walz signed [Minnesota Session Laws Chapter 11](#) into law – also known as the hands-free cell phone bill.

EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 2019, ALL CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING MUST BE HANDS-FREE.

Below is a list of FAQs and information for all drivers – both personally and when using a county vehicle. *Minnesota Statutes 169.011, subdivision 94 and 169.475 provides the specifics of the law.*



**HANDS-FREE
MINNESOTA LAW**
HandsFreeMN.org

DEFINITIONS

- **Wireless communications device** means (1) a cellular phone, or (2) a portable electronic device that is capable of receiving and transmitting data, including but not limited to text messages and e-mail, without an access line for service.
- A **wireless communications device does not include**: (1) a device or feature that is permanently integrated into the vehicle; or (2) a global positioning system or navigation system that is only capable of being used for navigation purposes; or (3) a two-way radio, citizens band radio, or amateur radio equipment used in accordance with FCC rules and regulations.”

WHAT CAN I DO UNDER THE LAW?

- You may use voice commands or single-touch activation (WITHOUT HOLDING THE DEVICE) to make calls, text, listen to music/podcasts and get directions.

WHAT CAN'T I DO UNDER THE LAW?

You are prohibited from holding the device in your hand while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic to do the following:

- Initiate, compose, send, retrieve, or read an electronic message.
- Engage in a cellular phone call.
- Access the following types of content: video, audio, images, games, or software applications.

According to statute, “a motor vehicle is not in motion or a part of traffic if the vehicle is lawfully stopped, is in a location that is not designed or ordinarily used for vehicular travel and is not obstructing traffic.”

EXCEPTIONS

A person may ONLY hold a wireless device to:

- Obtain emergency assistance to (1) report a traffic accident, medical emergency or serious traffic hazard, or (2) prevent a crime about to be committed;
- In the reasonable belief that a person's life or safety is in immediate danger; or
- In an authorized emergency vehicle while in the performance of official duties.

Only those performing official duties in an authorized emergency vehicle are exempt, and public works/highway vehicles are not considered authorized emergency vehicles.

FINES

- The first violation is \$50 plus court fees. Second and subsequent violations are \$275 plus court fees.

OPTIONS FOR DRIVERS

Don't use your phone when you drive. If you must use your device while driving, here are some ways to go hands-free (handsfreemn.org):

- Use a single earphone that has the microphone, and you are hands-free. Remember, using earphones in both ears at the same time while driving is illegal in Minnesota.
- Pair your phone to your current car or truck. If your existing vehicle and phone can talk to each other, pair up and go hands-free.
- Buy an auxiliary cable and connect your phone's earphone jack to your vehicle's AUX jack. You can operate your phone by voice or single touch and listen through your car's audio system. Auxiliary cables can be purchased for less than \$5.
- If your car is older and doesn't have an AUX jack but has a cassette player, you can buy an adapter that fits into the cassette player and allows you to connect your phone through the earphone jack. The cassette adapters cost about \$30.
- Buy a holder to clip your phone to the dash. You can use it in a voice-activated or single-touch mode. Clips can be simple and cheap or complicated. Make sure you get one that holds your phone securely. Prices range from less than \$5 to \$50. This option utilizes the speakerphone on your wireless device.
- Buy a Bluetooth speaker or earphone to pair with your phone. There are many after-market choices for both, all of which let you go hands-free. Prices are generally in the \$10 to \$50 range.

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