

Ring in the New Year – Not While Driving

*You are driving down Route 34, on your way to work. You have left early, as you do not want to be late due to current construction and bad weather. You are moving along listening to the news radio, when suddenly your cell phone rings. You see that it is your boss and in your line of work, it is very important that you are accessible by phone. You grab your cell phone, answer and begin to talk about the day's meetings and agenda. You then see red and blue lights in your review mirror, you ask yourself "why am I being stopped, I'm wearing my seatbelt and I'm not speeding." You are being stopped for talking on your cell phone! **Beginning January 1, 2014 it will be illegal to use ALL handheld mobile phones while driving on Illinois roadways.***

House Bill 1247 prohibits the operation of a motor vehicle on any road in Illinois while using a mobile phone or other electronic communication device. The bill makes exceptions for hands-free devices, including those with headsets that can initiate a call using a single button or voice command. An Electronic Communication means an electronic device, including but not limited to a handheld wireless telephone, hand held personal digital assistant, or a portable mobile computer. It does not include a global positioning system or navigation system or a device that is physically or electronically integrated into the motor vehicle.

As mentioned in the House Bill above, the law still permits drivers to utilize a cell phone in hands-free mode or with the use of a headset. Also, there are some exceptions for the use of cell phones; those who use a cell phone to report an emergency and for those who are stopped in traffic, so long as their vehicle is in neutral or in park.

Fines for first offenses are set at \$75.00, and for subsequent violations \$100.00, \$125.00 and \$150.00.

House Bill 2585 increases the penalties that can be imposed on drivers whose use of an electronic device while driving causes an accident. If the accident causes great bodily harm, the driver can be sentenced to up to one year in prison, and a fatal accident can result in a prison sentence of one to three years. Current law only allows these drivers to be charged with traffic violations. The new law takes effect January 1, 2014.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, drivers using handheld devices are four times more likely to get into an accident, causing injuries and distracted driving caused 380,000 injuries and more than 3,000 fatalities across the country in 2011.

The holiday sales will soon be out, so make arrangements to either purchase your hands free device or get in the habit of NOT using your phone while driving.

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