

Nicole Mahrt-Ganley
916-440-1116
nicole.ganley@apci.org

FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

June 30, 2020

Put the Phone Down Idaho, It's the Law

BOISE, ID — Effective tomorrow, July 1, using a handheld phone while operating a moving motor vehicle in Idaho is prohibited. Idaho drivers will receive warnings until January 1, 2021. Lyn Darrington Elliott, assistant vice president for state affairs of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA) released the following statement reminding residents of Idaho of the new law:

"Distracted driving and the ubiquitous use of smartphones behind the wheel are widely believed to be among the leading causes for crashes and fatalities nationwide. Laws combating distracted driving are a critical step to changing behavior and protecting drivers, their passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, and everyone else on Idaho's roads. When we get behind the wheel, we must commit to be the best driver we can be and stay focused on the road and our surroundings. Put your phone down and keep your family's and friend's safety first. The leadership shown by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Winder of Boise and House Transportation Chair Joe Palmer of Meridian was key to strengthening the law for the safety of all Idahoans.

"COVID-19 also could be unknowingly adding more dangers on the roads for motorists and pedestrians. Some people may not have driven as much during the last several weeks or months. As states reopen businesses, drivers must renew their commitment to safety on the roads."

According to data analytics organization, [Zendrive](#), it is estimated that drivers increased phone usage by approximately 38 percent during the first 5 weeks of COVID-19, compared to the 5 weeks prior to the beginning of the pandemic.

Twenty-four states and the District of Columbia now prohibit the use of handheld devices while driving. According to a study conducted by the Georgia Legislature, 12 out of 15 states saw an average 16 percent decrease in traffic fatalities within two years of passing a handheld ban.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 2,841 people were killed by distracted driving in 2018. But this number does not tell the whole story. It is difficult to detect distraction following a crash, which makes distracted driving one of the most underreported traffic safety issues.

APCIA encourages drivers to make safety a priority when they get behind the wheel.

- **Watch for pedestrian and cyclists:** As more Americans look for ways to stay active while at home, there are more pedestrians and cyclists on the road. Drivers should be alert and use caution when approaching crosswalks and traveling near walk trails or parks.
- **Follow the speed limit:** High speeds can significantly increase the severity of a crash.
- **Eliminate distractions:** Drivers should keep their eyes and attention on the road and hands on the wheel by programming their GPS or navigation before starting their commute and not using their cell phones while driving.
- **Talk to your teen new drivers:** Remind them that distracted driving and phone usage have no place behind the wheel.
- **Don't drive under the influence and plan ahead:** Without exception, when making plans, designate a driver and always refrain from operating a vehicle if you have used alcohol or other substances.
- **Share the roads safely with large trucks:** Drivers of passenger vehicles should share the road safely, and remember that trucks have blind spots, make wider turns, and require additional stopping distance.

The American Property Casualty Insurance Association (APCIA) is the primary national trade association for home, auto, and business insurers. APCIA promotes and protects the viability of private competition for the benefit of consumers and insurers, with a legacy dating back 150 years. APCIA members represent all sizes, structures, and regions—protecting families, communities, and businesses in the U.S. and across the globe.

