



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
247 INDUSTRIAL WAY N
DALLAS, GA 30132

OFFICE (770)443-3010
JAIL (770)443-3030
FAX (770)443-3014

Media Contact: Sergeant Ashley Henson
770-505-5535 Office
678-247-3903 Cell
678-224-4799 Fax
ashley.henson@paulding.gov
www.paulding.gov/sheriff

Date: 06/12/18

To: Metro Atlanta Media

For Immediate Release

Georgia Hands Free Law

(Paulding County, GA) During this year's Legislative Session, Georgia became the 16th state in the U.S., along with the District of Columbia (D.C.), Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, to enact a hands-free driving law that prohibits all drivers from using hand-held cell phones while driving. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures website, www.ncsl.org, the prevalence of cellular phones has started many debates related to the role cell phones play in driver distraction, including the following:

- **Hand-held Cell Phone Use Ban:** 16 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands prohibit all drivers from using hand-held cell phones while driving.
- **All Cell Phone ban:** No state bans all cell phone use for all drivers, but 38 states and D.C. ban all cell phone use by novice or teen drivers, and 21 states and D.C. prohibit any cell phone use for school bus drivers.
- **Text Messaging ban:** 47 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands ban text messaging for all drivers.
- Missouri prohibits text messaging by novice or teen drivers.

On July 1, 2018, the Hands-Free Georgia Act will become effective in Georgia. According to the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), Georgia has seen significant increases in vehicle traffic crashes, fatalities and bodily injury. The vast majority of these increases have been in rear-end crashes, single-car crashes and crashes by drivers from 15 to 25-years-old. State and local law enforcement have stated that these incidents are a clear indication of driver



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
247 INDUSTRIAL WAY N
DALLAS, GA 30132

OFFICE (770)443-3010
JAIL (770)443-3030
FAX (770)443-3014

inattention. GOHS adds that the 15 states that have passed hands-free driving laws saw a 16 percent decrease in traffic fatalities in the two years after the law was passed. In addition, traffic fatalities were reduced even further in subsequent years. *GOHS provides the following details on its website in regards to the Hands-Free Georgia Act:*

House Bill 673- "Hands-Free Georgia Act"

House Bill 673 also known as the "Hands-Free Georgia Act" was passed by the Georgia General Assembly and signed into law by Governor Nathan Deal. The Hands-Free Georgia Act will take effect on July 1, 2018. The following is a brief description of what the law states. A link to the complete law can be found at www.gahighwaysafety.org.

- A driver cannot have a phone in their hand or use any part of their body to support their phone. Drivers can only use their phones to make or receive phone calls by using speakerphone, earpiece, wireless headphone, in-vehicle hands-free audio system or an electronic watch. GPS navigation devices are allowed.
- Headsets and earpieces can only be worn for communication purposes and not for listening to music or other entertainment.
- A driver may not send or read any text-based communication unless using voice-based communication that automatically converts message to a written text or is being used for navigation or GPS
- A driver may not send or read any e-mails, social media or other internet content
- A driver may not watch a video unless it is for navigation.
- A driver may not record a video (continuously running dash cams are exempt)



Exceptions to the law are as follows:

1. Reporting a traffic crash, medical emergency, fire, criminal activity or hazardous road conditions.
2. An employee or contractor of a utility service provider acting within the scope of their employment while responding to a utility emergency.
3. A first responder (law enforcement, fire, EMS) during the performance of their official duties.



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
247 INDUSTRIAL WAY N
DALLAS, GA 30132

OFFICE (770)443-3010
JAIL (770)443-3030
FAX (770)443-3014

4. When in a lawfully parked vehicle—this DOES NOT include vehicles stopped for traffic signals and stop signs on the public roadway.
- 5.

Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators

1. Commercial Motor Vehicle Operators can only use one button to begin or end a phone call.
2. Cannot reach for a wireless telecommunications device or stand-alone electronic device that it no longer requires the driver to be a seated position or properly restrained by a safety belt.

School Bus Drivers

1. The driver of a school bus cannot use a wireless telecommunication device or two-way radio while loading or unloading passengers.
2. The driver can only use a wireless telecommunication device while the bus is in motion as a two-way radio to allow live communications between the driver and school and public safety officials

Enforcement

When the Hands-Free Georgia Act takes effect July 1, the Georgia Department of Public Safety and local law enforcement have the option to issue warnings for violations as part of the effort to educate and to help motorists adapt to the new law. However, citations can and will be issued starting July 1, for any violation of the Hands-Free Georgia Act, including those where the violation involves a traffic crash. There is not a 90-day grace period provision in the Hands-Free Georgia Act.

Penalties

- First conviction: \$50, one point on a license;
- Second conviction: \$100, two points on a license;
- Third and subsequent convictions: \$150, three points on a license.
-

For specific questions regarding the Hands-Free Georgia Act, please submit them to the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety website: <https://www.gahighwaysafety.org/contact/>.



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
247 INDUSTRIAL WAY N
DALLAS, GA 30132

OFFICE (770)443-3010
JAIL (770)443-3030
FAX (770)443-3014

Hands-Free Devices

The intent of the Hands-Free Georgia Act is not to make purchasing a hands-free device/accessory mandatory, but rather to emphasize that the law prohibits a driver from holding or supporting a mobile phone. If you choose not to purchase additional equipment, a phone can be left on a vehicle's console, a front seat, etc., if otherwise operated in accordance with the law. However, state and local law enforcement recommend the purchase and use of a hands-free device if using a mobile phone while driving for the safety of all Georgians.

Now that you hopefully have a better understanding of the Hands-Free Georgia Act, it is important that you know the types of hands-free devices available if you choose to purchase one. Georgia drivers will be able to use their phone's speakerphone, Bluetooth technology, an earpiece, a headphone or other device to allow them to communicate on a hands-free basis.

Below is a brief summary of the different types of cell phone hands-free devices:

- **Wired Headset with Microphones** – These headsets are physically connected to your chosen cell phone through some sort of wire. In general, there are two kinds of wired headsets: 1) the first style includes a “boom” style microphone that extends from the earpiece; and 2) the other style has an in-line microphone where the mic is placed along the cord.
- **Bluetooth Wireless Headset/Earpiece** – Bluetooth headsets have an advantage over their wired counterparts in that the Bluetooth headsets are wireless. Most cellular phones, especially smart phones, have Bluetooth technology, which makes usability simple and accessible.
- **Bluetooth Speakerphones** – Bluetooth speakerphones remove the discomfort of wearing a headset all day for drivers. Many of these speakerphones come with a clip so that they can be attached to a car visor, heat vent or car cigarette adapter. Just remember, that when not driving alone, your conversations can be heard by everyone in the vehicle.
- **Other Ways to Go Hands-Free** – One of the most popular types of cell phone hands-free devices is an in-vehicle communication system built into the stereo system of many new vehicles. These operate in much the same way as the separate Bluetooth speakerphones described above, except the audio is sent



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
247 INDUSTRIAL WAY N
DALLAS, GA 30132

OFFICE (770)443-3010
JAIL (770)443-3030
FAX (770)443-3014

out through the car's speakers. If you do not have this option available, you can use the speakerphone function which is built right into most phones.

There are, however, two final hands-free solutions. Do not use your phone while traveling in your vehicle and take advantage of the "Do Not Disturb" option in your phone's settings. Refer to your user guide on how to set up this feature.

The credit for the information contained in this release should go to the Georgia Department of Public Safety and the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety. For more information, please visit the below website:

<http://www.headsupgeorgia.com/handsfree-law/>

