



**Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles  
Public Consultation**

**Distracted Drivers: Use of Cell Phones and other Technologies while Driving  
Summary of Discussion Paper & Discussion Questions**

Below is a summary of the research findings in the discussion paper, “Addressing the Problem of Distracted Driving and its Impacts to Road Safety. The full research paper can be found at [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/legislation/current.htm](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/legislation/current.htm). **Following the summary is a list of questions for your comments.**

Summary

- Evidence shows that driver distraction, of all types, is associated with approximately 25 per cent of crashes and results in a significant cost to society in terms of tragic loss of life, serious injuries and resulting monetary costs. Activities such as talking on a cell phone and manipulating electronic devices require significant amounts of attention being diverted away from driving tasks.
- In both simulated and real driving environments, the use of electronic devices has been shown to result in crashes and near misses. Drivers fail to process approximately 50 per cent of the visual information in their driving environment when they are using electronic communication devices. Evidence also concludes that there is no difference between the level of driver distraction associated with hands-free and hand-held cell phone use.
- Talking to a passenger in the vehicle versus talking to someone through electronic means does not cause the same level of distraction. Reasons for the difference include: the passenger is aware of the driving situation; the passenger can serve as an additional look-out for hazards; the passenger can adjust speech, tone and conversation to the driving environment; and cell phone conversations suppress brain activity necessary for attention to perceptual input.
- There is no evidence that listening to the radio or a book on tape degrades driving performance.

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you think government should pass additional laws restricting the use of electronic devices while driving, or should emphasis be placed on increased public education and awareness and the enforcement of existing laws governing driver distraction (e.g. "Driving Without Due Care and Attention")?
2. Which electronic devices should be considered under this framework ?
3. Should hands-free devices be treated the same or differently as hand-held devices?
4. What would be the appropriate penalties for drivers disobeying such a law (e.g. failure to wear a seatbelt is a fine of \$167)?
5. Should any proposed laws apply to all drivers, or only specific categories of drivers (i.e., new drivers)?
6. Should exemptions be provided to any class of drivers (i.e., emergency responders, professional drivers, etc.)

### You may send your comments to:

Mailing Address:

Policy & Research Branch

**Office of the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles**

Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General

PO Box 9254 Stn Prov Govt

Victoria BC V8W 9J2

Fax: 250 356-5568

E-mail: [distracted.driving@gov.bc.ca](mailto:distracted.driving@gov.bc.ca)

**Deadline for submission of comments to the discussion questions is August 7, 2009.**