



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo: Stronger Penalties for Distracted Driving Take Effect July 26th

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. July 24, 2013

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Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick), Chairman of the New York State Senate's Transportation Committee, announced that higher fines for distracted driving will take effect on July 26th. The new penalties were included as part of the state budget.

"Texting and talking on the phone while driving wheel puts lives at risk; distracted drivers are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a regular driver. The constant obsession with using cell phones while driving has to stop. Higher fines for individuals who repeatedly text or talk on the phone while driving will give motorists another incentive to keep their eyes on the road, not their cell phone, when behind the wheel," said Senator Fuschillo.

The new rules taking effect July 26th establish higher fines for individuals who repeatedly text and drive or who drive while talking on a cell phone without a hands-free device. In addition, the rules make the fine for talking on a cell-phone while driving consistent with the fine for texting while driving. The new maximum fines are:

- 1st offense: \$150 maximum fine

- 2nd offense within 18 months: \$200 maximum fine
- 3 or more offenses within 18 months: \$400 maximum fine

These fines are in addition to the five penalty points which offenders receive on their driving record for each violation.

Prior to the new rules, drivers faced a maximum fine of \$150 per violation for texting while driving and \$100 per violation for talking on a non hands-free cell phone while driving, in addition to driver license penalty points. Repeat offenders did not face any enhanced penalties.

Distracted driving is a serious and dangerous problem on the roadways. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, distracted drivers are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than a non-distracted driver. Sending or receiving a text message takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, the equivalent of driving the length of an entire football field blind. There were over 246,000 tickets issued for texting or talking on a cell phone while driving in New York State last year.

The higher fines are the latest measure taking effect in New York State to combat distracted driving. Effective June 1st, the penalty points drivers receive on their license for each distracted driving offense was raised from three to five. Additionally, a new law took effect on July 1st which allows the state to suspend the driver's licenses of teenage drivers who text or talk on a cell phone while driving.