

Feds ban use of hand-held cell phones for commercial drivers | SafetyNewsAlert.com

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The [writing has been on the wall](#) for a while, but now the federal government has made it official: Interstate truck and bus drivers can no longer use hand-held cell phones while driving.

U.S. Transportation Secretary announced the final rule on Wednesday, just before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The joint rule from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) prohibits commercial drivers from using a hand-held cell phone while operating a commercial truck or bus.

Potential penalties for a violation of the new regulation include:

- civil penalties of up to \$2,750 for drivers for each offense
- disqualification from operating a commercial motor vehicle for multiple offenses
- suspension of a driver's commercial driver's license after two or more serious traffic violations
- maximum penalty of \$11,000 for commercial truck and bus companies that allow their drivers to use hand-held cell phones while driving.

About four million commercial drivers will be affected by the rule.

FMCSA research shows using a hand-held cell phone requires a commercial driver to take several risky steps beyond what's required for using a hands-free phone, including searching and reaching for the phone.

Commercial drivers reaching for an object are three times more likely to be involved in a crash. Dialing a hand-held phone makes it six times more likely that commercial drivers will be involved in a crash.

This isn't the first step the federal government has taken in this area. In September 2010, FMCSA issued a regulation banning text messaging while operating a commercial truck or bus. PHMSA followed up with a similar rule in February 2011 for intrastate hazardous materials drivers.

[More than 5,400 people died](#) and half a million were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver in 2009.

[Many large truck and bus companies](#), such as UPS, Wal-Mart, Peter Pan and Greyhound, already had policies banning their drivers from using hand-held phones.

Do you think state governments should follow up with bans on hand-held cell phones while driving for all drivers? Let us know what you think in the comments below.

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