

# F A C T S

1. Australians spend large amounts of time in their vehicles and drivers often use the time to make and receive phone calls.
2. The use of mobile phones in vehicles affects concentration and road safety.
3. Drivers who use a mobile telephone while driving are four times more likely to be in a motor vehicle collision than drivers who do not (Redelmeier and Tibshirani - 1997).

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## superior driving techniques



driving with  
mobile phones

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The law in NSW has always been specific: It is illegal to drive and use a hand-held telephone.

Other states were not so specific until December 1999 when a national road law was adopted making the law on mobile phone use clear.

The driver of a vehicle (except an emergency vehicle or police vehicle) must not use a hand-held mobile phone while the vehicle is moving, or is stationary but not parked, unless the driver is exempt from this rule under another law of this jurisdiction.

In the event of a collision a mobile phone can be a valuable safety device. Rather than restricting its use the law requires drivers use mobile phones thoughtfully and with safety in mind.

## For the driver

### Responsibility

Responsibility for safe control of a vehicle rests with the driver. By law, a driver must always have control of their vehicle.

Failure to use a mobile phone in accordance with the law is an offence.

### Safety tips for hands-free phone usage

Australian law allows the use of hands-free units while the vehicle is in motion (in Victoria it is illegal to use your mobile phone (or driver's aid) when driving, unless it is within a commercially designed holder fixed to your vehicle).

There is still concern however that a hands-free phone can create a distraction.

There is a lot a driver can do to reduce the distraction of a mobile phone.

Some of these include:

- the use of voice mail or call divert
- the use of speed dialling
- having a passenger make the call
- installation of the phone close to eye-level
- if the phone is between the front seats, there is a tendency to look down at it when dialling, talking or listening
- keeping calls as brief as possible.

In reality, the use of a hands-free phone can distract from the careful control of a vehicle, just as hand-held phones can. Therefore, the safest way to use a hands-free phone is to stop the vehicle before making or receiving calls.

### Stop to make and check calls

When driving long distances, drivers should make regular stops to check for and return any calls. Regular stopping will help combat tiredness, another significant cause of collisions.

## Other distractions

Phone related collisions result from a driver's limited attention to the road. In other words it is the "distraction" that is the problem.

This distraction does not only apply to mobile phones. The introduction of digital technology has created new hazards in the vehicle such as e-mail or navigation and route guidance systems. All these are additional to the current distractions of eating, drinking, changing CDs, tuning the radio, fixing the air conditioning and reading the street directory.

To reduce the chance of a collision, drivers must practice the safety tips listed and try to minimise distractions. Above all, drivers should focus their attention on the road. It deserves and demands their full attention.

## For the employer

Employers must ensure that their employees drive safely within the limits of the law. It is essential an employer provide a safe working environment.

### Safety obligations

If it is necessary to provide mobile phones to employees, then within the gamut of the Occupational Health & Safety Act it is a requirement to provide accessories to maintain a safe method of operation. This may include a hands-free kit or voicemail system.

### Training

As part of the phone service, employers should install short code dialling and operator connected calls. Drivers should be trained in the use of these services and employers must insist they are used.