

1. What kinds of actions are considered distracted driving?

The following activities conducted while driving are considered distracted driving:

- using hand-held cell phones
- texting or e-mailing (even when stopped at red lights)
- using electronic devices like laptop computers, video games, cameras, video entertainment displays and programming portable audio players (e.g., MP3 players)
- entering information on GPS units
- reading printed materials in the vehicle
- writing, printing or sketching
- personal grooming (brushing and flossing teeth, putting on makeup, curling hair, clipping nails or shaving)

2. What kinds of actions are not considered distracted driving?

The following activities are not specifically restricted under the law:

- using a cell phone in hands-free mode – the device is not held in the driver's hand and is activated by voice or a single touch to the device
- using an earphone – if it is used in a hands-free or voice-activated manner
- drinking beverages – coffee, water or pop, etc.
- eating a snack
- smoking
- talking with passengers
- listening to a portable audio player – as long as it is set up before you begin driving
- calling emergency services such as 9-1-1 with a hand-held cell phone

A comprehensive list of activities is available online at:

<http://www.transportation.alberta.ca/DistractedDriving.htm>

3. How many distracted driving convictions were there in 2014-15?

Between April 1, 2014 and March 31, 2015, there were 27,417, an increase of 1504 from the previous year.

4. Why have we pursued as regulation rather than legislation? What are the differences between regulation and legislation in the context of these penalties?

Changing the penalty via regulation allowed the government to move faster and with greater efficiency in addressing this traffic safety issue. The biggest difference in changing the

regulation versus legislation is that only a sitting Legislature can change legislation, while a government may change a regulation.

5. When do the new demerit point penalties for distracted driving come into effect?

In addition to the \$287 fine, three demerit points will be assigned for distracted driving offences that occur on January 1, 2016 and later. Any charges or convictions before January 1, 2016, will not result in demerit points.

6. How effective have demerit points been in discouraging distracted driving in other jurisdictions?

International research suggests that demerit systems are an effective way to change driver behaviour. A national survey in the U.S. found that drivers who did not regularly use a seat belt considered demerit points to be the most effective way to increase their use (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2011). Further studies showed increased seat belt usage in Italy and reductions in red light violations in Hong Kong. Spain also saw a reduction in road fatalities after instituting a demerit point system.

7. What are the penalties if I get a distracted driving ticket between now and December 31, 2015?

The fine for distracted driving is \$287. No demerit points will be added to your driving record.

8. How will these changes affect my driving abstract after January 1, 2016?

Offences and convictions on and after January 1, 2016 will appear with demerit points on a driving abstract, regardless of the driver licence class?

9. How will this affect commercial carriers?

Offences and convictions on and after January 1, 2016 will appear on commercial driver abstracts and carrier profiles.

10. What are demerit points?

Drivers receive demerit points when they violate the rules of the road. If a driver collects too many demerit points, their driver's licence is suspended. Drivers in the Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Program are suspended when they collect eight or more points. Fully licensed drivers are suspended when they collect 15 or more points.

For more information regarding demerit points for GDL and fully licensed drivers please visit: <http://transportation.alberta.ca/content/docType45/Production/Demeritpointssystem.pdf>