

Wednesday 10 April 2019

ROAD SAFETY COLUMN – APRIL 2019

No Mobile Phones for L and P Plate Drivers

Did you know P platers can't listen to music via Bluetooth or use GPS maps while they're driving? And that it's illegal for their passengers (as well as the driver) to have phone conversations on speaker?

A recent study has found many young drivers on provisional licences may not be aware of some of the conditions of their provisional licences.

Researcher Verity Truelove from QUT's Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland interviewed young drivers to find out what influenced their compliance with provisional licence restrictions. She found that their non-compliance with some of the rules was because they simply didn't know about them.

"The provisional licence phone-related restrictions were widely unknown and the least complied with, particularly regarding using the phone for Global Positioning Service (GPS) applications and the use of Bluetooth to listen to music, as well as the passenger loudspeaker restriction," she said.

Although the study was Queensland based it is likely the situation is the same here in NSW. The current mobile phone laws for P plate drivers were implemented in December 2016 after a spike in the rise in fatal accidents among young people.

Learner, P1 and P2 licence holders are not permitted to use a mobile phone at all while driving or riding. This includes when their vehicle is stopped but not parked, such as waiting at traffic lights or stuck in traffic. They must be parked out of the line of traffic to use the phone in any way. They cannot use hands free devices or loudspeaker and a passenger's phone must not be connected via Bluetooth.

These laws encourage learner and provisional drivers and riders to concentrate on developing their vehicle control and hazard-perception skills. Mobile phones can distract novice drivers and riders from the driving task.

Research shows that the distraction of using a mobile phone has two aspects – firstly there's the physical distraction of fiddling with the handset and taking your eyes off the road to check the screen. Secondly, there's the "cognitive" distraction – this basically means taking your mind off the driving task to concentrate on your phone or the conversation.

In NSW, drivers who use a mobile phone illegally are penalised five demerit points. For learners and P1 drivers this exceeds their demerit point threshold and they would face a three-month licence suspension. P2 drivers and riders who commit a mobile phone offence will be two demerit points away from reaching their threshold.

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During double demerit periods, drivers who break the rules are penalised 10 demerit points. If a P2 driver hits 7 demerits, not only are they suspended, but after their suspension is over they'll spend an extra 6 months on their P2, before they can apply for a full licence.

It's easy to avoid getting penalised for using your mobile phone. Just turn it off, put it in the glovebox or the boot and retrieve your messages when you've finished driving.

Remember that being distracted when driving, such as by a mobile phone, increases the risk of a crash. Simply taking your eyes off the road for longer than two seconds, doubles the risk of a crash. At 60 km/h if you look at your phone while driving for just two seconds, you travel 33 metres blind. A short lapse of concentration can have lifelong consequences.



Photo caption: L & P platers cannot use mobile phones for any function, even if they are in a cradle or hands free.

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Precis or Summary: April Road Safety Column – No Mobile Phones for L and P Plate Drivers			
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