

October 08, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- Florida ban on texting while driving starts October 1

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Apart from driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, texting while driving is one of the most dangerous things a person can do behind the wheel. However, while Florida has dedicated significant resources toward preventing and prosecuting intoxicated driving, it hasn't focused the same attention on distracted driving.

But, the state is making some progress in the right direction. Starting on October 1, all drivers will be prohibited from texting or emailing on their phones while their vehicles are in motion. In passing the law, Florida became the 41st state to outlaw this type of cellphone use.

Many safety advocates, however, worry that the law is not as strong as it should be. Unlike most states, Florida's ban only makes texting while driving a secondary offense. This means that drivers cannot be pulled over or cited for illegal cellphone use unless a police officer observes them violating another traffic law, like speeding, leaving their lane or running through a red light. Furthermore, drivers will still be allowed to text while their vehicles are stopped in traffic.

Some Floridians are also concerned that the state is not doing enough to educate drivers on the new law. When they created the law, Florida legislators budgeted \$1 million to, in part, raise awareness of the texting while driving ban. However, Gov. Rick Scott vetoed this financing, leaving limited options for promoting the law. So far, the main plan is to inform drivers of the prohibition on texting via digital highway message boards.

### Texting while driving a deadly danger

Under the new law, a first offense for texting while driving is punishable by only a \$30 fine. But, this fine pales in comparison to the real-world consequences that come from distracted driving.

According to data supplied by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,331 people

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Written by Australian Business

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died in car accidents caused by distracted driving in 2011 alone. What's more, another 387,000 people suffered personal injury in distracted driving accidents that year.

While these accident numbers are staggering, they make sense when you consider how dangerous distracted driving is, and how many people do it. The NHTSA reports that, at any given moment, there are an average of 660,000 Americans who are using cellphones or other electronic devices while driving. Each one of these drivers is putting everyone else on the road at risk. According to research from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, texting or otherwise manually entering data on a cellphone makes a person three times more likely to get into an accident. This is true even for something as simple as dialing a phone number.

Every driver has a duty to avoid all forms of distracted driving, regardless of how strict Florida's law might be. When you get behind the wheel, make a commitment to leave your phone alone.

If you are injured or a loved one is killed in an accident caused by a distracted driver, it is important to take steps to protect your legal right to seek compensation for the damages you have suffered. An experienced Florida personal injury lawyer can help you understand your options for taking action.