

# MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Safety Tips: Cell Phone Safety



According to statistics, there are 83 million cell phone subscribers in the U.S. A very large number of these subscribers use them while driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Association (NHTSA) has determined through research that as many as 50% of the accidents are related to driver inattention, or at least this is a contributing factor.

The New England Journal of Medicine did a major study of cell phone users and the effects of them during periods of driving and other circumstances. The study revealed that cell phone users were four times more likely to have an accident than those drivers that were not using them while driving.

There are several different schools of thought on cell phone use while driving. Safety advocates state that they would like to see a rule set up for enforcing of no cell phone use while driving. Other sources say that hand-held cell phone use is only a minor nuisance. Some positive points of cell phone use include the following:

- Economic – They do allow us to conduct business while being stuck in traffic.
- Personal Safety – They make it easy to call for help in case we are thrown into an emergency situation.
- Mechanical – Roadside assistance is only a call away.
- Access – It makes it easier to stay in close touch with colleagues or family.
- Money Saving – It is sometimes cheaper to call from cell phones than from our home phones.

The experts say that opinions range from wanting cell phones to be declared illegal while driving any type of vehicle to those that propose the fact of leaving the issue alone, as they feel that cell phone use while driving is only a minor nuisance. The NHTSA says that you can count on one thing: The Federal government will stay out of it and let the individual states wrestle with their own regulations.

However, while researching for facts on this subject, I read on [www.reedberry.com](http://www.reedberry.com) that the state of California has passed a law, effective July 1, 2008, with certain exceptions, that you may not drive while using a hand-held cell phone. You will need to use a speaker phone or headset. All drivers under 18 years of age will be prohibited from using a cell phone in a vehicle **PERIOD**, except in an emergency situation.

The World of Wireless Communications, a cellular industry organization in favor of education and opposed to regulation offer some safety tips:

- Get familiar with your phone and all its features.
- When available, use a hands-free device.
- Position your phone within easy reach.
- Suspend calls in heavy traffic or hazardous weather conditions.
- Do not take notes or look up phone numbers while driving.
- If possible, place calls when you are not moving or merging.
- Do not engage in stressful or emotional conversations that may divert your attention from the road.

Other safety tips to remember while driving:

- Program family or frequently used numbers in your memory bank.
- If you could (and you really should) pull off the road to make calls, pick your spot to be safe from road traffic and safe from a possible crime spot (dimly lit, no light or a remote area).
- If you must talk while in transit, hold the phone at eye level to have a clear view of the road.
- Try to make your calls while your vehicle is stationary.