

R U Texting n Driving?

For as long as there've been cars, there've been distracted drivers. And that's never been truer than now, with drivers facing temptation from Internet-enabled mobile phones, GPS devices, iPods and all the other electronics out there.

That said, one of the most dangerous distractions remains texting while driving, an activity that the [Virginia Tech Transportation Institute](#) reports makes it 23 times more likely that a driver will crash.

With statistics like that, it's no wonder states like Pennsylvania feel spurred to action. The commonwealth became the 37th state to ban texting while driving when it enacted Act 98 in March. This new law stipulates that anyone caught tapping out a message behind the wheel can be pulled over and fined \$50.

The Keystone State joins the District of Columbia and nine other states within [ERIE's footprint](#) — including Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin — to prohibit texting while driving.

The District of Columbia, Maryland and New York take it a step further by banning drivers from *texting and talking with handheld devices*. West Virginia is set to do the same by July 2012.

Smart moves

Research out there shows that these laws are smart moves. For instance, a recent study by the [Safe Transportation Research and Education Center](#) (SafeTREC) at the University of California, Berkeley, revealed that California's 2008 prohibition on using handheld devices behind the wheel led to a direct 47 percent decrease in fatalities.

Even still, with more than 3,000 fatalities at the hands of distracted drivers in 2010 alone, there's more work ahead. The [National Transportation Safety Board](#) (NTSB), an independent federal agency whose recommendations have led to the passage of many state and federal laws, advocates banning motorists from using all hand-held and hands-free devices while driving.

To get that message in front of Congress and the public, NTSB hosts [Distraction.gov](#), a resource where visitors can learn more about the dangers of distracted driving and take action. Give it a click to learn more about what you can do to keep the roads safe — especially if you reside in Ohio, the only state within ERIE's territory without any prohibitions against using handheld devices while driving.

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