



Understanding the Legal Consequences of Distracted Driving

Distracted driving has become an alarming issue. While it may seem harmless to glance at a text message or adjust the GPS while driving, the consequences can be devastating. Recognizing the severity of this problem, lawmakers have started implementing stringent measures to curb distracted driving and hold offenders accountable. If a driver is caught engaging in distracted driving, the legal consequences can be life-altering.

Legal Consequences of Engaging in Distracted Driving



Traffic Violations and Fines. In many jurisdictions, distracted driving is considered a traffic offense. Laws have been enacted to prohibit activities such as using a mobile phone without a hands-free device, texting, emailing, or engaging in any other distracting behavior while driving. Violating these laws can lead to large fines, points on your driving record, and increased insurance premiums. Repeat offenses may result in more severe penalties, including the suspension or revocation of driving privileges.



Criminal Charges. Distracted driving can sometimes escalate from a traffic violation to a criminal offense, particularly if it causes injury or leads to a fatality. Laws vary from state to state, but if an individual is injured or killed as a result of distracted driving, the driver may face criminal charges such as vehicular assault or vehicular manslaughter. These charges can carry severe consequences, including significant fines, imprisonment, or probation.



Civil Liability. Distracted drivers may face civil liability for the damages they cause. Victims of accidents caused by distracted drivers can file personal injury lawsuits seeking compensation for medical expenses, lost wages, pain and suffering, and other damages. The distracted driver may be held financially responsible for the harm caused, which can result in substantial financial burdens.



Insurance Impact. Distracted driving can have lasting effects on auto insurance rates. Insurance companies often view drivers with a history of distracted driving as high-risk, which may lead to increased premiums or even denial of coverage. Additionally, an accident resulting from distracted driving can lead to the loss of any available “safe driver” or “accident forgiveness” benefits, resulting in significant financial implications for the driver.



Community Service and Education Programs. In some states, convicted distracted drivers may be required to complete community service or attend driver education programs focused on the dangers of distracted driving.

On June 15, 2024, Greg Andriotis was sentenced to 30 years in prison in Florida for killing nine-year old Logan Scherer. According to police, Andriotis was searching the internet on his phone while driving nearly 80 miles per hour when he slammed into the back of the Scherers' car. The jury found Andriotis guilty of vehicular homicide and three counts of reckless driving. In 2019, Florida lawmakers were motivated by Logan's death to make texting and driving a primary offense – police can now pull over drivers who are using their phones.

“I wish more than anything that I could change what happened that day. I would gladly trade places with Logan if it meant he would live. He deserved to live a full life. I took that away from him and I took him away from [his family].”

— GREG ANDRIOTIS

Distracted driving poses a significant risk to public safety, and the legal consequences associated with it are becoming more severe as lawmakers strive to address this issue. By understanding the legal implications, you can make informed decisions and prioritize responsible driving practices. No text message, call, or other distraction is worth jeopardizing your safety, the safety of others, and the potential legal and financial consequences that can follow.