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Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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NTSB Seeks to Ban Use of Hand Held and Hand-Free Devices in Cars

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Last week, the National Transportation Safety Board issued a press release detailing its plans to move forward with the implementation of a nationwide ban on the nonemergency use of portable electronic devices (PED) while driving a car.

The driving force behind the proposed regulation is to prevent [car accidents](#) caused by distracted driving, thus making the roads safer for everyone. As explained in [the press release](#), accidents caused by distracted driving have increased substantially in recent years and the NTSB believes that banning the use of PEDs is the best way to reduce these types of car accidents:

The safety recommendation specifically calls for the 50 states and the District of Columbia to ban the nonemergency use of portable electronic devices (other than those designed to support the driving task) for all drivers. The safety recommendation also urges use of the NHTSA model of high-visibility enforcement to support these bans and implementation of targeted communication campaigns to inform motorists of the new law and heightened enforcement. "According to NHTSA, more than 3,000 people lost their lives last year in distraction-related accidents", said Chairman Deborah A.P. Hersman. "It is time for all of us to stand up for safety by turning off electronic devices when driving." "No call, no text, no update, is worth a human life."

Distracted driving is, of course, a huge problem, as [we've discussed](#) many times in the past. However, some argue that a flat out ban of PEDs may be going too far. Some PEDs now have personal GPS navigation capabilities and are being used in lieu of the traditional GPS device. PEDs have also replaced traditional maps and are used by many these days for that purpose—and the use of maps in cars was never before banned. So, the argument is that banning these devices across the board is simply a knee jerk reaction to new technologies and that perhaps banning the use of these devices for specific functions makes more sense than a flat out ban.

Of course, regardless of the distraction, whether electronic or otherwise, distracted driving is dangerous. It's important to promulgate laws that regulate this behavior, but it is likewise important to pass carefully crafted, narrowly tailored laws designed to reduce traffic accidents and the serious injuries that can result.

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