

Cell phone laws differ in other states

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Q. Inland residents often drive to the neighboring states of Arizona, Nevada and Oregon for summer vacation. How do the cell phone laws differ in neighboring states? How common are cell phone restrictions for motorists nationwide?

A. California has one of the strictest cell phone driving laws in the nation. In California, all drivers are required to use a hands-free device when talking on the phone. Motorists younger than 18 are not allowed to drive while using a cell phone at all, and texting is banned for all California drivers.

In contrast, Nevada does not have any laws regulating cell phone use while driving. In Arizona, only school bus drivers are restricted from using them while driving. In Oregon, drivers can talk on their cell phones without using a hand-held device. Drivers younger than 18 who hold a learner's permit or intermediate license are not permitted to drive and talk on cell phones at the same time, however. Drivers younger than 18 who hold a learner's permit or intermediate license also are not allowed to text while driving.

Laws in Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio and Pennsylvania authorize local governments to ban cell phone use while driving. Chicago and Santa Fe are among cities that have adopted bans. In these states, it may be difficult for drivers passing through to know the cell phone laws, so it is probably wise to avoid talking on the phone at all while driving.

Local governments cannot prohibit cell phone use in Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah.

Text messaging is banned for all drivers in 13 states, including Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia and Washington, as well as the District of Columbia.

Novice drivers are banned from texting in Delaware, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas and West Virginia.

To research cell phone laws by state, go to www.iihs.org/laws/cellphonelaws.aspx.