

**DATE:** April 1, 2013

**TO:** Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation and Economic Development  
Representative Bob Jensen, Co-Chair  
Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair  
Senator Chip Shields  
Representative Caddy McKeown  
Representative Tobias Read  
Senator Bill Hansell

**FROM:** Senior Trooper Timothy Plummer  
Oregon State Police

**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 9

Senate Bill 9 changes the level of violation for drivers operating a motor vehicle while using a mobile communication device from a class D to a class B violation. It also directs the Oregon Department of Transportation to post signs along the highways advising drivers of the maximum fine for violation of this statute.

Distracted driving and the use of mobile communication devices while driving poses a serious traffic safety issue. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), approximately 18% of all injury crashes in 2010 were reported to be caused by distracted drivers.<sup>1</sup> In addition; the number of people killed in crashes involving a distracted driver is rising annually:

- 2011 – 3,331 fatalities nationwide
- 2010 – 3,267 fatalities nationwide

The number of motor vehicle injuries involving distracted drivers is also staggering

- 2011 – 387,000 injuries nationwide
- 2010 – 416,000 injuries nationwide

In Oregon, we have observed similar trends. The Oregon Department of Transportation reports an increase in the number of drivers who were using cell phones and were involved in crashes:<sup>2</sup>

\*2011 – 2 fatalities  
\*2010 – 3 fatalities  
\*2009 – 4 fatality

\*2011 – 276 injuries  
\*2010 – 159 injuries  
\*2009 – 238 injuries

Findings from research conducted by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration shows that sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 miles per hour, it is like driving the length of an entire football field, blind.<sup>3</sup>

Since the enactment of Oregon Revised Statue 811.507, approximately 14,165 citations have been filed through the circuit courts of Oregon by law enforcement officers for the offense of operating a motor vehicle while using a mobile communication device.<sup>4</sup>

Just as with the “Drive Sober Save Lives” and “Click it, or Ticket” highway signs, raising the motorist level of awareness is an effective part of any traffic safety effort.

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)
2. Oregon Department of Transportation – Crash Analysis and Reporting Unit
3. U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration “Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operation Sept. 2009
4. Office of the State Court Administrator