
SENATE BILL 5656

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Senators Rivers, Chase, Fain, and Keiser; by request of Washington Traffic Safety Commission

Read first time 01/28/15. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to enhancing public safety by reducing distracted
2 driving incidents caused by the use of personal wireless
3 communications devices; amending RCW 46.61.668, 46.20.055, 46.20.075,
4 46.25.010, and 46.20.130; creating a new section; repealing RCW
5 46.61.667; prescribing penalties; and providing an effective date.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that cell
8 phones can be a benefit to an individual's convenience and efficiency
9 but are a dangerous distraction when driving a vehicle. The
10 legislature further recognizes that under the federal funding
11 authorization, moving ahead for progress in the 21st century act,
12 funds have been set aside to combat the emerging national problem of
13 distracted driving, and that distracted driving is one of the top
14 three causes of fatal teen collisions. The legislature further
15 recognizes that for Washington state to enhance public safety and
16 qualify for these federal funds, the existing cell phone laws must be
17 amended to meet the new requirements. As such, it is the intent of
18 the legislature that our state's existing cell phone laws are brought
19 in line with federal grant criteria to ensure that the maximum amount
20 of federal funds are made available to these important safety
21 programs.

1 **Sec. 2.** RCW 46.61.668 and 2013 c 224 s 16 are each amended to
2 read as follows:

3 ~~((Except as provided in subsection (2)(a) of this~~
4 ~~section,)) A person operating a ((moving noncommercial)) motor
5 vehicle (i) while holding a personal wireless communications device
6 in his or her hand or hands or (ii) who((, by means of an
7 electronic)) uses a personal wireless communications device((, sends,
8 reads, or writes a text message)) to read or manually enter data
9 including, but not limited to, short message service, texting, e-
10 mailing, instant messaging, or engaging in any other form of
11 electronic data retrieval or electronic data communication, is guilty
12 of a traffic infraction.~~

13 ~~((Except as provided in subsection (2)(b) of this section, a~~
14 ~~person driving a commercial motor vehicle, as defined in RCW~~
15 ~~46.25.010, including while temporarily stationary because of traffic,~~
16 ~~a traffic control device, or other momentary delays, who, by means of~~
17 ~~an electronic wireless communications device, sends, reads, or writes~~
18 ~~a text message, is guilty of a traffic infraction. For purposes of~~
19 ~~this subsection, "driving" does not include operating a commercial~~
20 ~~motor vehicle with or without the motor running when the driver has~~
21 ~~moved the vehicle to the side of, or off, a highway and has stopped~~
22 ~~in a location where the vehicle can safely remain stationary.~~

23 ~~(c) A person does not send, read, or write a text message when he~~
24 ~~or she reads, selects, or enters a phone number or name in a wireless~~
25 ~~communications device for the purpose of making a phone call)) The
26 holder of an intermediate license under RCW 46.20.075 or driver's
27 instruction permit under RCW 46.20.055 may not use a personal
28 wireless communications device in any manner while operating a motor
29 vehicle.~~

30 ~~((a)) Subsection (1)((a)) of this section does not apply~~
31 ~~to ((a person operating)):~~

32 ~~((i) An authorized emergency vehicle;~~

33 ~~(ii) A voice operated global positioning or navigation system~~
34 ~~that is affixed to the vehicle and that allows the user to send or~~
35 ~~receive messages without diverting visual attention from the road or~~
36 ~~engaging the use of either hand; or~~

37 ~~(iii) A moving motor vehicle while using an electronic wireless~~
38 ~~communications device to:~~

39 ~~(A) Report illegal activity;~~

40 ~~(B) Summon medical or other emergency help;~~

1 ~~(C) Prevent injury to a person or property; or~~

2 ~~(D) Relay information that is time sensitive between a transit or~~
3 ~~for-hire operator and that operator's dispatcher, in which the device~~
4 ~~is permanently affixed to the vehicle.~~

5 ~~(b) Subsection (1)(b) of this section does not apply to a person~~
6 ~~operating a commercial motor vehicle when necessary to communicate~~
7 ~~with law enforcement officials or other emergency services.~~

8 ~~(3) Infractions under subsection (1)(a) of this section shall not~~
9 ~~become part of the driver's record under RCW 46.52.101 and~~
10 ~~46.52.120. Additionally, a finding that a person has committed a~~
11 ~~traffic infraction under subsection (1)(a) of this section shall not~~
12 ~~be made available to insurance companies or employers)) (a) A driver~~
13 ~~who uses a personal wireless communications device to contact~~
14 ~~emergency services; or~~

15 ~~(b) Emergency services personnel who use a personal wireless~~
16 ~~communications device while (i) operating an emergency services~~
17 ~~vehicle and (ii) engaged in the performance of their duties as~~
18 ~~emergency services personnel.~~

19 ~~(3) For purposes of this section: (a) "Operating a motor vehicle"~~
20 ~~includes the operation of a motor vehicle while it is moving and~~
21 ~~while it is temporarily stationary because of traffic, a traffic~~
22 ~~light, or a stop sign, and does not include when the vehicle has~~
23 ~~pulled over to the side of, or off, the roadway and has stopped in a~~
24 ~~location where it can safely remain stationary; and (b) "personal~~
25 ~~wireless communications device" includes a device through which~~
26 ~~personal wireless services, as defined in 47 U.S.C. Sec.~~
27 ~~332(c)(7)(C)(i), are transmitted, and does not include a global~~
28 ~~navigation satellite system receiver used for positioning, emergency~~
29 ~~notification, or navigation purposes.~~

30 ~~(4) A person found to have committed more than one violation of~~
31 ~~this section within a five-year period must be assessed a monetary~~
32 ~~penalty equal to twice the penalty assessed under RCW~~
33 ~~46.63.110. Fifty percent of the moneys collected under this~~
34 ~~subsection must be deposited into the highway safety fund under RCW~~
35 ~~46.68.060.~~

36 ~~(5) This section does not prohibit the use of a system that is~~
37 ~~physically or electronically integrated into a motor vehicle and~~
38 ~~provides the user with services such as emergency notification and~~
39 ~~navigation.~~

1 (6) The state preempts the field of regulating the use of
2 personal wireless communications devices in motor vehicles, and this
3 section supersedes any local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or
4 regulations enacted by any political subdivision or municipality to
5 regulate the use of personal wireless communications devices by the
6 operator of a motor vehicle.

7 **Sec. 3.** RCW 46.20.055 and 2012 c 80 s 5 are each amended to read
8 as follows:

9 (1) **Driver's instruction permit.** The department may issue a
10 driver's instruction permit with or without a photograph to an
11 applicant who has successfully passed all parts of the examination
12 other than the driving test, provided the information required by RCW
13 46.20.091, paid an application fee of twenty-five dollars, and meets
14 the following requirements:

15 (a) Is at least fifteen and one-half years of age; or

16 (b) Is at least fifteen years of age and:

17 (i) Has submitted a proper application; and

18 (ii) Is enrolled in a traffic safety education program offered,
19 approved, and accredited by the superintendent of public instruction
20 or offered by a driver training school licensed and inspected by the
21 department of licensing under chapter 46.82 RCW, that includes
22 practice driving.

23 (2) **Waiver of written examination for instruction permit.** The
24 department may waive the written examination, if, at the time of
25 application, an applicant is enrolled in:

26 (a) A traffic safety education course as defined by RCW
27 28A.220.020(2); or

28 (b) A course of instruction offered by a licensed driver training
29 school as defined by RCW 46.82.280.

30 The department may require proof of registration in such a course
31 as it deems necessary.

32 (3) **Effect of instruction permit.** A person holding a driver's
33 instruction permit may drive a motor vehicle, other than a
34 motorcycle, upon the public highways if:

35 (a) The person has immediate possession of the permit; and

36 (b) ~~((The person is not using a wireless communications device,~~
37 ~~unless the person is using the device to report illegal activity,~~
38 ~~summon medical or other emergency help, or prevent injury to a person~~
39 ~~or property; and~~

1 ~~(e)~~) An approved instructor, or a licensed driver with at least
2 five years of driving experience, occupies the seat beside the
3 driver.

4 (4) **Term of instruction permit.** A driver's instruction permit is
5 valid for one year from the date of issue.

6 (a) The department may issue one additional one-year permit.

7 (b) The department may issue a third driver's permit if it finds
8 after an investigation that the permittee is diligently seeking to
9 improve driving proficiency.

10 (c) A person applying for an additional instruction permit must
11 submit the application to the department in person and pay an
12 application fee of twenty-five dollars for each issuance.

13 **Sec. 4.** RCW 46.20.075 and 2011 c 60 s 44 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) An intermediate license authorizes the holder to drive a
16 motor vehicle under the conditions specified in this section. An
17 applicant for an intermediate license must be at least sixteen years
18 of age and:

19 (a) Have possessed a valid instruction permit for a period of not
20 less than six months;

21 (b) Have passed a driver licensing examination administered by
22 the department;

23 (c) Have passed a course of driver's education in accordance with
24 the standards established in RCW 46.20.100;

25 (d) Present certification by his or her parent, guardian, or
26 employer to the department stating (i) that the applicant has had at
27 least fifty hours of driving experience, ten of which were at night,
28 during which the driver was supervised by a person at least twenty-
29 one years of age who has had a valid driver's license for at least
30 three years, and (ii) that the applicant has not been issued a notice
31 of traffic infraction or cited for a traffic violation that is
32 pending at the time of the application for the intermediate license;

33 (e) Not have been convicted of or found to have committed a
34 traffic violation within the last six months before the application
35 for the intermediate license; and

36 (f) Not have been adjudicated for an offense involving the use of
37 alcohol or drugs during the period the applicant held an instruction
38 permit.

1 (2) For the first six months after the issuance of an
2 intermediate license or until the holder reaches eighteen years of
3 age, whichever occurs first, the holder of the license may not
4 operate a motor vehicle that is carrying any passengers under the age
5 of twenty who are not members of the holder's immediate family as
6 defined in RCW 42.17A.005. For the remaining period of the
7 intermediate license, the holder may not operate a motor vehicle that
8 is carrying more than three passengers who are under the age of
9 twenty who are not members of the holder's immediate family.

10 (3) The holder of an intermediate license may not operate a motor
11 vehicle between the hours of 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. except when the holder
12 is accompanied by a parent, guardian, or a licensed driver who is at
13 least twenty-five years of age.

14 ~~(4) ((The holder of an intermediate license may not operate a~~
15 ~~moving motor vehicle while using a wireless communications device~~
16 ~~unless the holder is using the device to report illegal activity,~~
17 ~~summon medical or other emergency help, or prevent injury to a person~~
18 ~~or property.~~

19 ~~(5))~~ It is a traffic infraction for the holder of an
20 intermediate license to operate a motor vehicle in violation of the
21 restrictions imposed under this section.

22 ~~((6) Except for a violation of subsection (4) of this section,))~~
23 (5) Enforcement of this section by law enforcement officers may be
24 accomplished only as a secondary action when a driver of a motor
25 vehicle has been detained for a suspected violation of this title or
26 an equivalent local ordinance or some other offense.

27 ~~((7))~~ (6) An intermediate licensee may drive at any hour
28 without restrictions on the number of passengers in the vehicle if
29 necessary for agricultural purposes.

30 ~~((8))~~ (7) An intermediate licensee may drive at any hour
31 without restrictions on the number of passengers in the vehicle if,
32 for the twelve-month period following the issuance of the
33 intermediate license, he or she:

34 (a) Has not been involved in an accident involving only one motor
35 vehicle;

36 (b) Has not been involved in an accident where he or she was
37 cited in connection with the accident or was found to have caused the
38 accident;

39 (c) Has not been involved in an accident where no one was cited
40 or was found to have caused the accident; and

1 (d) Has not been convicted of or found to have committed a
2 traffic offense described in chapter 46.61 RCW or violated
3 restrictions placed on an intermediate licensee under this section.

4 **Sec. 5.** RCW 46.25.010 and 2013 c 224 s 3 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 The definitions set forth in this section apply throughout this
7 chapter.

8 (1) "Alcohol" means any substance containing any form of alcohol,
9 including but not limited to ethanol, methanol, propanol, and
10 isopropanol.

11 (2) "Alcohol concentration" means:

12 (a) The number of grams of alcohol per one hundred milliliters of
13 blood; or

14 (b) The number of grams of alcohol per two hundred ten liters of
15 breath.

16 (3) "Commercial driver's license" (CDL) means a license issued to
17 an individual under chapter 46.20 RCW that has been endorsed in
18 accordance with the requirements of this chapter to authorize the
19 individual to drive a class of commercial motor vehicle.

20 (4) The "commercial driver's license information system" (CDLIS)
21 is the information system established pursuant to 49 U.S.C. Sec.
22 31309 to serve as a clearinghouse for locating information related to
23 the licensing and identification of commercial motor vehicle drivers.

24 (5) "Commercial learner's permit" (CLP) means a permit issued
25 under RCW 46.25.052 for the purposes of behind-the-wheel training.

26 (6) "Commercial motor vehicle" means a motor vehicle or
27 combination of motor vehicles used in commerce to transport
28 passengers or property if the motor vehicle:

29 (a) Has a gross combination weight rating or gross combination
30 weight of 11,794 kilograms or more (26,001 pounds or more), whichever
31 is greater, inclusive of (~~(a-[any])~~) any towed unit (~~([for-units])~~) or
32 units with a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of
33 more than 4,536 kilograms (10,000 pounds or more), whichever is
34 greater; or

35 (b) Has a gross vehicle weight rating or gross vehicle weight of
36 11,794 kilograms or more (26,001 pounds or more), whichever is
37 greater; or

38 (c) Is designed to transport sixteen or more passengers,
39 including the driver; or

1 (d) Is of any size and is used in the transportation of hazardous
2 materials as defined in this section; or

3 (e) Is a school bus regardless of weight or size.

4 (7) "Conviction" means an unvacated adjudication of guilt, or a
5 determination that a person has violated or failed to comply with the
6 law in a court of original jurisdiction or by an authorized
7 administrative tribunal, an unvacated forfeiture of bail or
8 collateral deposited to secure the person's appearance in court, a
9 plea of guilty or nolo contendere accepted by the court, the payment
10 of a fine or court cost, entry into a deferred prosecution program
11 under chapter 10.05 RCW, or violation of a condition of release
12 without bail, regardless of whether or not the penalty is rebated,
13 suspended, or probated.

14 (8) "Disqualification" means a prohibition against driving a
15 commercial motor vehicle.

16 (9) "Drive" means to drive, operate, or be in physical control of
17 a motor vehicle in any place open to the general public for purposes
18 of vehicular traffic. For purposes of RCW 46.25.100, 46.25.110, and
19 46.25.120, "drive" includes operation or physical control of a motor
20 vehicle anywhere in the state.

21 (10) "Drugs" are those substances as defined by RCW 69.04.009,
22 including, but not limited to, those substances defined by 49 C.F.R.
23 Sec. 40.3.

24 (11) "Employer" means any person, including the United States, a
25 state, or a political subdivision of a state, who owns or leases a
26 commercial motor vehicle, or assigns a person to drive a commercial
27 motor vehicle.

28 (12) "Gross vehicle weight rating" (GVWR) means the value
29 specified by the manufacturer as the maximum loaded weight of a
30 single vehicle. The GVWR of a combination or articulated vehicle,
31 commonly referred to as the "gross combined weight rating" or GCWR,
32 is the GVWR of the power unit plus the GVWR of the towed unit or
33 units. If the GVWR of any unit cannot be determined, the actual gross
34 weight will be used. If a vehicle with a GVWR of less than 11,794
35 kilograms (26,001 pounds or less) has been structurally modified to
36 carry a heavier load, then the actual gross weight capacity of the
37 modified vehicle, as determined by RCW 46.44.041 and 46.44.042, will
38 be used as the GVWR.

39 (13) "Hazardous materials" means any material that has been
40 designated as hazardous under 49 U.S.C. Sec. 5103 and is required to

1 be placarded under subpart F of 49 C.F.R. Part 172 or any quantity of
2 a material listed as a select agent or toxin in 42 C.F.R. Part 73.

3 (14) "Motor vehicle" means a vehicle, machine, tractor, trailer,
4 or semitrailer propelled or drawn by mechanical power used on
5 highways, or any other vehicle required to be registered under the
6 laws of this state, but does not include a vehicle, machine, tractor,
7 trailer, or semitrailer operated exclusively on a rail.

8 (15) "Out-of-service order" means a declaration by an authorized
9 enforcement officer of a federal, state, Canadian, Mexican, or local
10 jurisdiction that a driver, a commercial motor vehicle, or a motor
11 carrier operation is out-of-service pursuant to 49 C.F.R. Secs.
12 386.72, 392.5, 395.13, 396.9, or compatible laws, or the North
13 American uniform out-of-service criteria.

14 (16) "Positive alcohol confirmation test" means an alcohol
15 confirmation test that:

16 (a) Has been conducted by a breath alcohol technician under 49
17 C.F.R. Part 40; and

18 (b) Indicates an alcohol concentration of 0.04 or more.

19 A report that a person has refused an alcohol test, under
20 circumstances that constitute the refusal of an alcohol test under 49
21 C.F.R. Part 40, will be considered equivalent to a report of a
22 positive alcohol confirmation test for the purposes of this chapter.

23 (17) "School bus" means a commercial motor vehicle used to
24 transport preprimary, primary, or secondary school students from home
25 to school, from school to home, or to and from school-sponsored
26 events. School bus does not include a bus used as a common carrier.

27 (18) "Serious traffic violation" means:

28 (a) Excessive speeding, defined as fifteen miles per hour or more
29 in excess of the posted limit;

30 (b) Reckless driving, as defined under state or local law;

31 (c) Driving while (~~using~~) holding a (~~hand-held~~) personal
32 wireless communications device (~~{hand-held mobile telephone}~~),
33 defined as a violation of RCW (~~(46.61.667(1)(b))~~) 46.61.668(1)(a)(i)
34 or an equivalent administrative rule or local law, ordinance, rule,
35 or resolution;

36 (d) Texting, defined as a violation of RCW 46.61.668(1)(a)(ii) or
37 an equivalent administrative rule or local law, ordinance, rule, or
38 resolution;

39 (e) A violation of a state or local law relating to motor vehicle
40 traffic control, other than a parking violation, arising in

1 connection with an accident or collision resulting in death to any
2 person;

3 (f) Driving a commercial motor vehicle without obtaining a
4 commercial driver's license;

5 (g) Driving a commercial motor vehicle without a commercial
6 driver's license in the driver's possession; however, any individual
7 who provides proof to the court by the date the individual must
8 appear in court or pay any fine for such a violation, that the
9 individual held a valid CDL on the date the citation was issued, is
10 not guilty of a "serious traffic violation";

11 (h) Driving a commercial motor vehicle without the proper class
12 of commercial driver's license endorsement or endorsements for the
13 specific vehicle group being operated or for the passenger or type of
14 cargo being transported; and

15 (i) Any other violation of a state or local law relating to motor
16 vehicle traffic control, other than a parking violation, that the
17 department determines by rule to be serious.

18 (19) "State" means a state of the United States and the District
19 of Columbia.

20 (20) "Substance abuse professional" means an alcohol and drug
21 specialist meeting the credentials, knowledge, training, and
22 continuing education requirements of 49 C.F.R. Sec. 40.281.

23 (21) "Tank vehicle" means any commercial motor vehicle that is
24 designed to transport any liquid or gaseous materials within a tank
25 or tanks having an individual rated capacity of more than one hundred
26 nineteen gallons and an aggregate rated capacity of one thousand
27 gallons or more that is either permanently or temporarily attached to
28 the vehicle or the chassis. A commercial motor vehicle transporting
29 an empty storage container tank, not designed for transportation,
30 with a rated capacity of one thousand gallons or more that is
31 temporarily attached to a flatbed trailer is not considered a tank
32 vehicle.

33 (22) "Type of driving" means one of the following:

34 (a) "Nonexcepted interstate," which means the CDL or CLP holder
35 or applicant operates or expects to operate in interstate commerce,
36 is both subject to and meets the qualification requirements under 49
37 C.F.R. Part 391 as it existed on July 8, 2014, or such subsequent
38 date as may be provided by the department by rule, consistent with
39 the purposes of this section, and is required to obtain a medical
40 examiner's certificate under 49 C.F.R. Sec. 391.45 as it existed on

1 July 8, 2014, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the
2 department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section;

3 (b) "Excepted interstate," which means the CDL or CLP holder or
4 applicant operates or expects to operate in interstate commerce, but
5 engages exclusively in transportation or operations excepted under 49
6 C.F.R. Secs. 390.3(f), 391.2, 391.68, or 398.3, as they existed on
7 July 8, 2014, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the
8 department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section,
9 from all or parts of the qualification requirements of 49 C.F.R. Part
10 391 as it existed on July 8, 2014, or such subsequent date as may be
11 provided by the department by rule, consistent with the purposes of
12 this section, and is therefore not required to obtain a medical
13 examiner's certificate under 49 C.F.R. Sec. 391.45 as it existed on
14 July 8, 2014, or such subsequent date as may be provided by the
15 department by rule, consistent with the purposes of this section;

16 (c) "Nonexcepted intrastate," which means the CDL or CLP holder
17 or applicant operates only in intrastate commerce and is therefore
18 subject to state driver qualification requirements; or

19 (d) "Excepted intrastate," which means the CDL or CLP holder or
20 applicant operates in intrastate commerce, but engages exclusively in
21 transportation or operations excepted from all or parts of the state
22 driver qualification requirements.

23 (23) "United States" means the fifty states and the District of
24 Columbia.

25 (24) "Verified positive drug test" means a drug test result or
26 validity testing result from a laboratory certified under the
27 authority of the federal department of health and human services
28 that:

29 (a) Indicates a drug concentration at or above the cutoff
30 concentration established under 49 C.F.R. Sec. 40.87; and

31 (b) Has undergone review and final determination by a medical
32 review officer.

33 A report that a person has refused a drug test, under
34 circumstances that constitute the refusal of a federal department of
35 transportation drug test under 49 C.F.R. Part 40, will be considered
36 equivalent to a report of a verified positive drug test for the
37 purposes of this chapter.

38 **Sec. 6.** RCW 46.20.130 and 2006 c 190 s 1 are each amended to
39 read as follows:

1 (1) The director shall prescribe the content of the driver
2 licensing examination and the manner of conducting the examination,
3 which shall include, but is not limited to:

4 (a) A test of the applicant's eyesight and ability to see,
5 understand, and follow highway signs regulating, warning, and
6 directing traffic;

7 (b) A test of the applicant's knowledge of traffic laws and
8 ability to understand and follow the directives of lawful authority,
9 orally or graphically, that regulate, warn, and direct traffic in
10 accordance with the traffic laws of this state. The director shall
11 incorporate questions on distracted driving in this portion of the
12 examination;

13 (c) An actual demonstration of the applicant's ability to operate
14 a motor vehicle without jeopardizing the safety of persons or
15 property. If the applicant is deaf or hearing impaired, the applicant
16 may be accompanied by an interpreter to assist the applicant during
17 the demonstration. The interpreter will be of the applicant's
18 choosing from a list provided by the department of licensing; and

19 (d) Such further examination as the director deems necessary:

20 (i) To determine whether any facts exist that would bar the
21 issuance of a vehicle operator's license under chapters 46.20, 46.21,
22 and 46.29 RCW; and

23 (ii) To determine the applicant's fitness to operate a motor
24 vehicle safely on the highways.

25 (2) If the applicant desires to drive a motorcycle or a motor-
26 driven cycle, he or she must qualify for a motorcycle endorsement
27 under RCW 46.20.500 through 46.20.515.

28 NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. RCW 46.61.667 (Using a wireless
29 communications device or hand-held mobile telephone while driving)
30 and 2013 c 224 s 15, 2010 c 223 s 3, & 2007 c 417 s 2 are each
31 repealed.

32 NEW SECTION. Sec. 8. This act takes effect August 1, 2015.

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