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What Illinois Residents Need to Understand About the Use of Hands-Free Devices Behind the Wheel.

LANE & LANE, LLC

OFFICE: (312) 332-1400 CONTACT: MARK BROWN

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Many studies have shown that using a cell phone while driving can be dangerous, even if you do not hold it in your hands. Using a hands-free or Bluetooth device can still take your mind off the road, creating a potentially deadly distraction. However, according to a National Safety Council poll, [80 percent of drivers still believe that using a hands-free device while driving is safer than using a handheld cell phone](#). Are you falling for the same myth?

Eighty Percent of Drivers Are Wrong About Hands-Free Devices

The National Safety Council has reviewed more than 30 studies that show using a hands-free device, such as a Bluetooth headset, is no safer than using a handheld cell phone. In fact, using any type of cell phone while driving makes it four times more likely that you will be involved in an accident. A [study from the Texas Transportation Institute](#) found using voice-to-text features behind the wheel was just as dangerous as texting by hand, and [a study from AAA](#) found that using voice commands on a phone while driving was actually *more* dangerous than using a handheld phone. Yet about 70 percent of drivers who use hands-free devices say they do so for safety reasons.

Why Talking or Texting With a Hands-Free Device Is Still Distracted Driving

There are three primary forms of distracted driving:

- Taking your hands off the wheel
- Taking your eyes off the road
- Taking your mind off the task of driving

While hands-free devices allow drivers to keep their hands on the wheel, they do not allow drivers to keep their minds on driving safely. Drivers are distracted by their conversations—even if their hands are still on the steering wheel. Using voice commands to scroll through email or answer a text takes more concentration that you might realize, and accidents can happen when your mind isn't on the road.

What You Should Know About Hands-Free Device Laws in Illinois

In Illinois, there is a ban on the use of handheld phones behind the wheel, whether you're talking, texting, or "just checking." Along with the ban, Illinois also made it illegal for young drivers and bus drivers to use hands-free devices while they drive. However, most Illinois drivers over the age of 19 are still allowed to use hands-free devices while driving—and most other states also have few restrictions on the use of hands-free devices.

Despite existing laws and public education campaigns, the National Safety Council reports that cell phones still contribute to about 26 percent of car accidents, and around 9 percent of drivers on the road at any given moment are talking on their phones. Using a phone behind the wheel—even with a legal hands-free device—significantly increases the odds that you will be involved in a serious wreck.

Illinois Drivers Can Still Be Held Responsible for the Injuries and Accidents They Cause While Using Hands-Free Devices Behind the Wheel

Although using a hands-free device behind the wheel is legal in many situations, drivers who cause serious accidents can still be held responsible for driving distracted. While drivers using hands-free device may not face criminal charges for their behavior, accident victims and their families may have the right to hold them responsible for the cost of their injuries and losses through a personal injury lawsuit.

If you or someone you know has been injured in a car accident, or suffered any other serious injury due to the negligence of another, please ask them to contact me at 312-332-1400 or by email at markbrown@lane-lane.com. Please be sure to have the referral let our office know that they were referred by an EGL member and have them give us your name!