



AB 276 – Combat Distracted Driving

Background

AB 276 will raise the age under which certain cell phone restrictions, that are currently applicable to drivers under the age of 18, are enforceable to drivers under the age of 21.

Current California law prohibits motorists under the age of 18 from having a mobile device screen visible, if it is powered on while driving.

Motorists over the age of 18 can use a mobile device while driving, but it must be in a hands free mode and only accessible by a single swipe or tap.

Problem Being Addressed

Mobile devices are the most common source of distracted driving. The highest prevalence of distracted driving occurs with drivers between the ages of 15 to 20 years old. Among drivers in this age group, 9% of all fatal car crashes were caused by a distracted driver.

A 2021 survey by the California Office of Traffic Safety found that 74.3% of Californians identified distracted driving as their biggest traffic safety concern on California roadways.

This concern is valid. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 30,000 people die every year in the United States in car accidents involving a distracted driver, another 420,000 are injured.

Which code section is affected?

This bill would amend section 23124 of the Vehicle Code.

Summary

AB 276 ensures that drivers in the highest risk age bracket for distracted driving keep their eyes on the road, not their screen. This bill would only be applicable as a secondary offense when the screen is visible to the driver, while powered on.

The requirements of this bill will exempt 18, 19, and 20 year old drivers that are using their phone for purposes necessary for work.

Staff Contact

Caroline Strouse:
Caroline.Strouse@asm.ca.gov

Supporters

Pending