

SECTION 4: SAFETY ON THE ROAD

CELL PHONE SAFETY

Your mobile phone can be a lifeline for situations from car breakdowns and getting lost on your way to a property showing, to potentially threatening situations. Keep a fully charged cell phone with you during your workday and after work, including while you're showing a property or hosting an open house.

Here are some "do's and don't's" for making the best use of your cell phone:

- To best prepare for an emergency, pre-program important numbers into your phone. These may include your office, your roadside assistance service or garage, and even 9-1-1.
- In case you are incapacitated in an emergency such as a car accident, you can help responders identify who they should contact by using the acronym "I.C.E." In case of emergency. Simply enter "ICE" before the name of the person or people you want contacted, such as "I.C.E. Larry." This is becoming an accepted standard across the U.S.
- Be careful about giving out confidential information, such as bank account numbers, over your cell phone. Eavesdropping is a genuine problem for users of analog cell phones and cordless phones. The FM radio signals these phones transmit are easily monitored using readily available radio receivers, commonly called scanners. Digital cellular and cordless phones are dramatically less vulnerable to eavesdropping. Also be aware of your surroundings and eavesdroppers when talking on your cell phone in public.

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USING YOUR PHONE BEHIND THE WHEEL

The safest tip of all is: Don't make or accept cell phone calls while you're driving. This has been proven to be a distraction and, in fact many states and cities have laws prohibiting using a cell phone while driving. But if you must and are legally permitted to use your phone while driving, follow this advice for best safety practices:

- **Keep your hands on the wheel, not on your phone.**
- **Keep your eyes on the road.** Learn how to operate your phone without looking at it. Memorize the location of all the controls, so you can press the buttons you need without ever taking your eyes off the road.

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- Practice off-road. If your phone is new, practice using it and the voice mail system while your car is stopped.
- Use a hands-free unit. A hands-free unit lets you keep both hands on the wheel while you talk on the phone. Attach the microphone to the visor just above your line of vision, so you can keep your eyes on the road.
- Stay in your lane. Don't get so wrapped up in a conversation that you drift into the other lane. Pull into the right-hand lane while talking, so you only have to worry about traffic to the left.
- Use speed dialing. Program frequently called numbers and your local emergency number into the speed dial feature of your phone for easy, one-touch dialing. When available, use auto answer or voice-activated dialing.
- Never dial while driving. If you must dial manually, do so only when stopped. Pull off the road, or have a passenger dial for you.
- Take a message. Let your voice mail pick up your calls in tricky driving situations. It's easy to retrieve your messages later on.
- Know when to stop talking. Keep phone conversations brief so you can concentrate on your driving. If a long discussion is required, if the topic is stressful or emotional, or if driving becomes hazardous, end your call and continue when you're not in traffic.
- Know when to pull over. If you need to make a call or answer an incoming call that requires your attention, stop driving. Pull over in a safe and convenient location before taking your eyes off the road.
- Keep the phone in its holder. Make sure your phone is securely in its holder when you're not using it.
- Don't take notes while driving. If you need to jot something down, pull off the road.

(Sources: Canada Safety Council; the Washington Post; Spybusters.com)