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What you need to know about Oregon's new distracted driving cellphone law

New distracted driving laws go into effect Oct. 1 in Oregon. The new law, which will increase fines substantially, are more restrictive when it comes to electronic devices such as cellphones. STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

New law in effect

WHITNEY M. WOODWORTH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Oregon's upcoming distracted driving cellphone law has many residents nervous.

Would navigation apps like GoogleMaps suddenly be illegal?

Would drivers be forced to revert to using those pesky, pre-smartphone era printed out directions?

Would they wind up with a ticket and \$260 fine after listening to their favorite podcast or music station on their iPhone?

The new law, which took effect Oct. 1, comes with steeper fines, stricter rules and even possible jail time for repeat offenders.

But, as Salem police Senior Officer Mitch Mason said, drivers won't have to say goodbye to their favorite apps — as long as they use them correctly.

During his 22 years at the Salem Police Department and 18 years as a traffic patrol officer, Mason has seen cellphone use and distracted driving-related crashes drastically increase.

"Fatalities are just skyrocketing," he said.

The Statesman Journal sat down with Mason to address some common concerns over the new law:

Can I use GoogleMaps or other navigation apps if I have a dashboard mount? What if the phone is in my console, cup holder or on the seat?

People can still use their usual navigation apps as long they follow a few guidelines, Mason said.

Drivers will need to enter their destination address before they begin their trip. If they need to enter an address after they've begun driving, they'll need to pull over and legally park their car before keying in the address.

Once you start driving, the only time you can touch your phone is a "single touch or swipe to activate or deactivate the device," according to the new law.

Your phone can be mounted on the window or dashboard, on the console, in a cup holder or in your pocket — anywhere except in your hands.

Are other GPS devices okay to use?

Yes, if you follow the same guidelines: Enter the address before driving, pull over to type a new address, don't hold the device and refrain from touching except for a single tap or swipe.

Previously, the law only mentioned "communication devices," which Oregon courts interpreted to mean only cellphones used for talking and texting. Now, the wording has been changed to include all elec-

"Obviously, if your eyes are down and looking at your tablet or your phone, your eyes aren't up looking at the traffic and what's happening out there."

MITCH MASON
SALEM POLICE SENIOR OFFICER

tronic devices, including GPS devices, tablets and smartwatches.

Can I listen to music, podcasts, audiobooks or sports streaming?

Nothing makes a trip pass quicker than your favorite songs, a juicy audiobook or an interesting podcast. One reader voiced her concern over not being able to listen to baseball game broadcasts over her phone during trips. Another worried about having access to his iPhone music library.

Thankfully, drivers will not have to sit in silence or settle for the radio. Mason said travelers can listen to music, podcasts, audiobooks and streaming apps on their phones or devices as long as they keep their listening "hands-free."

The "single touch or swipe" rule might not apply to switching stations or clicking "thumbs down" on a Pandora song, he warned.

The wording of the law said the single tap is only allowed to activate or deactivate, so something shuffling through songs would be up to an officer's interpretation until there's an actual court ruling to go by.

"I probably wouldn't be "thumbs-downing" stuff," Mason said.

Can you wear headphones, earbuds or a Bluetooth earpiece while driving?

Yes, all are acceptable as are any devices built into your vehicle, Mason said.

Can I type in a phone number or address while I'm driving? What if I'm at a stoplight?

Nope, those are all off limits. Drivers will need to be legally parked in a parking spot or alongside the

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Silverton considers solutions to nuisance deer

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

It was still dark outside, so the three early-morning runners didn't notice they were being followed, not at first.

Then a passing car's headlights illuminated the sidewalk behind them, and Krista Kuenzi, Stephanie Traeger and Eric Rogers saw a deer chasing them down the street. It didn't have antlers, and it didn't seem threatening. Instead, it was loping about 5 feet behind them like a dog following its master.

"We did a double-take," Kuenzi said. "It was like something straight out of a Chevy Chase movie."

Outrunning the creature was laughable, so the joggers continued on their regular route from Webb Lake Estates toward Hwy. 214. Passing traffic didn't faze the deer, and it stuck with them as they jogged past the school district's bus barn and other businesses still closed for the night.

"The deer continued to trail us, consistently and respectfully staying about 5 or 10 feet behind us, but it didn't seem to have any intention of leaving us either," Kuenzi said.

After jogging nearly 2 miles with their new run-

ning buddy, Kuenzi, Traeger and Rogers slipped into Silverton Fitness — leaving the deer staring at them through the glass door — and quietly exited out the other side of the building. They maintained full communication blackout until safely clearing the far side of McDonald's next-door.

This saga is hardly the only "deer story" circulating in Silverton, a small town with a visible urban deer population. Black-tailed deer are regularly seen walking down the street, bedding down in yards and munching residents' plants. Depending on whom you ask, they are a charming part of small town life, an annoyance or an outright danger.

A new state law, passed overwhelmingly by state legislators and signed by the governor this summer, allows the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to cull nuisance deer in cities that ask for its help. The department is developing a 12-year pilot program that will start Jan. 1, 2019.

How exactly nuisance deer might be killed hasn't been clearly defined yet, but Senate Bill 373 prohibits the use of darts or lethal injections. It also requires the har-

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Two dead in crash north of Monmouth

JONATHAN BACH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

A head-on car crash north of Monmouth left two dead Sept. 22.

Jacob Bailey, 24, of Dallas, and Elizabeth Hoke, 18, of Silverton, were both pronounced dead at the scene after their cars collided on Riddell Road north of Whiteaker Road, the Polk County Sheriff's Office said. Riddell Road runs alongside Highway 99W.

Bailey was driving his silver 2007 Acura north as Hoke drove her black 2012 Volvo south, a pre-

liminary investigation shows. The two slammed into one another, and Bailey was ejected from his car.

The road was closed for about six hours, though the cause of the crash is still under investigation, the sheriff's office said.

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Photographer captures epic aurora borealis

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

The aurora borealis put on a spectacular light show for photographers across northern Oregon Sept. 27.

Jeff Green, a Salem photographer, was one of those lucky enough to be prepared. He headed into the mountains above State Highway 22 and captured a stunning shot.

"I've seen the Northern Lights a couple times, but never as strong as last night," Green said. "With

my naked eye, I could see the lights moving and dancing in the sky."

Green said the Facebook page, Aurora Alerts by Soft Serve News, was a great way to track good nights for the phenomenon.

"They publish updates when a solar storm has occurred and a visible Aurora may be visible," he said. "They detail the Aurora intensity measured in KPs. Sept. 27 was a strong KP6, which is very strong for our area."

To best see the lights,

he also recommended:

- 1) KP5 (on the K-index of geomagnetic activity) or above.
- 2) Clear cloudless skies
- 3) Darkest skies possible
- 4) Far away from city light pollution
- 5) No moon in the sky
- 6) Face North
- 7) Let your eyes adjust to total darkness for 15-20 minutes

"My mind was blown," Green said. "I can't wait for the next Aurora event!"



This picture, taken by Salem photographer Jeff Green, showcases the aurora seen in Oregon on Wednesday night. JEFF GREEN / SPECIAL TO THE STATESMAN JOURNAL

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