

HB 853 -- TEXTING WHILE DRIVING

SPONSOR: Wallingford

Currently, drivers under the age of 22 are prohibited from using electronic wireless communication devices to send text messages or electronic messages while driving. This bill extends the prohibition to drivers of all ages. Operators of noncommercial motor vehicles may still use "hands-free" electronic wireless communication devices, as defined in the bill.

The bill exempts emergency vehicles and other motor vehicles responding in a commercial capacity to another vehicle's request for roadside assistance from the prohibition against operators using electronic wireless communication devices. This bill also allows for use of an electronic wireless communication device to contact emergency services or relay information between for-hire operators and their dispatchers. Individuals under the age of 18 or who have an intermediate license or instruction permit are prohibited from using the devices for any purpose other than to contact emergency services.

A violation of the prohibition against using electronic wireless communication devices while driving shall be an infraction punishable by a \$50 fine, or by a \$100 if in a school zone or in a work zone when workers are present. Violations committed while operating a commercial vehicle shall constitute a serious traffic violation for purposes of commercial motor vehicle license suspensions.

This bill is similar to SB 532 (2020).