



## News Release

***For Immediate Release***

Contact: Russ Dubisky

Phone: 919-539-1375

Email: [russ@insurancefederationnc.com](mailto:russ@insurancefederationnc.com)

### **April is distracted driving awareness month**

**Raleigh, N.C. – April 3, 2019** – April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Distracted driving is one of the “4 Ds” (drunk, drugged, drowsy, and distracted) that causes an estimated 75% of accidents, and resulted in at least 123 fatalities in North Carolina last year, according to AAA of the Carolinas.

A recent study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) shows that smart phones continue to be the leading distraction for motorists. In fact, some evidence shows that the problem is getting worse and more drivers are using their phones now than ever before.

To help address this problem, North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey is backing legislation that would ban handheld cell phone use while driving.

The “Hands-Free NC Act” was introduced in the N.C. General Assembly with bi-partisan support to help reduce the number of deaths caused by distracted driving.

The bill would prohibit the hand-held use of a cellular phone or other wireless communications devices. However the bill would permit drivers to make hands-free calls, and provides for additional exceptions, for example, drivers making emergency calls or for emergency officers and first responders using a phone in their official duty.

Violators would face fines of \$100 for the first offense, a \$150 fine and one insurance point for the second offense, and a \$200 fine and two insurance points for subsequent offenses.

The proposal, if approved by the General Assembly and signed into law, would become effective on Jan. 1, 2020. Police officers would issue warning tickets during the first six-month to help bring awareness.

"I want to commend Rep. Kevin Corbin for introducing this legislation, and give kudos to the other primary sponsors, Reps. Jon Hardister, John Torbett and Garland Pierce for recognizing the dangers associated with distracted driving, especially from cell phone use," Commissioner Causey said. "Unless we take corrective action now, we'll see accidents increase that will take our loved ones and drive automobile insurance rates higher and higher," said Commissioner Causey.

*For more information from the Insurance Federation of North Carolina, or to schedule an interview, call (919)539-1375.*

*The Insurance Federation of North Carolina (IFNC) is a trade association established in 2004 by the leading property and casualty insurance companies doing business in North Carolina. IFNC serves as the voice for the industry on legislative and regulatory matters and promotes consumer awareness on issues of importance to the property and casualty insurance industry.*

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