



# Press Release



## Bristol Tennessee Police Department

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **No hand-held phones allowed in active school zones beginning January 1**

Breaking habits can be difficult, but what better time to attempt to break an old habit than the New Year?

There is a new state law that will come into effect on January 1 making it illegal to talk on a hand-held cell phone while driving through an active school zone. It has long been illegal to text or even read texts while driving in school zones.

The law states that it is a Class C misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$50, for a person to knowingly operate a motor vehicle and talk on a hand-held mobile telephone while the vehicle is in motion in any marked school zone in the State of Tennessee when a warning flasher or flashers are in operation. However, if the driver is 18 or older, and the telephone is equipped with a hand-free device, it will not be considered an offense. Drivers under the age of 18, or who possess a permit or intermediate license, will be considered breaking the law if they are talking either using a hands-free or handheld device while driving.

Major Matt Austin of the Bristol Tennessee Police Department said, "We are concerned that this new law will be catching people unaware in January as our children start back to school after the holiday break. A recent study by Safe Kids USA found that one in six drivers in school zones are distracted, with the most common distraction being cellphones."

It is wise to also remember that the speed limit is 15 miles per hour in a school zone. In Tennessee, a ticket in a school zone could result in fines of more than \$200.

For more information, please contact Major Matt Austin at [maustin@bristoltn.org](mailto:maustin@bristoltn.org) or call 423-989-5600.