

Get Ready to Stow Your BlackBerry While Travelling!

A proposed law would ban the use of many electronic devices in the car.

The Ontario government has tabled legislation which, if passed, will force the use of hands free or voice activated electronic devices. The banned devices include cell phone, BlackBerry devices, portable GPS devices, performing a manual dialing operation or typing on a device. Fines of \$500 or more plus demerit points will be levied if caught in violation of this new legislation.

We recommend some changes to the BlackBerry fleet managed by your firm to support this new law.

1. Firm issued BlackBerrys which require a password should be forced to have a password that requires two hands in order to enter the password. This will minimize password entry while driving.
2. The unit should lock itself within 5 minutes, again to discourage the use of the BlackBerry while travelling.
3. Firms may want to consider the purchase of Bluetooth headsets for all users with BlackBerry's that support voice dialing. In that way, calls can still be made and received without having to use the BlackBerry itself.

It will take a few months for this new law to be passed but now is a good time to review, update and redistribute your firm policies for technology in preparation for the change.

The Law Makes Sense

Lot's of people drive and use their BlackBerry's and cell phones. Everyone knows it is a distraction and that it is dangerous. BlackBerry users have also had close rear enders and the number of accidents resulting from distracted drivers has increased. Studies have shown that a person having a cell phone conversation can potentially remember nothing about their drive after completing the call. So the law makes sense if it will deter someone from using the phone. Many other provinces have introduced the ban.

The Law Doesn't Make Sense

Even though the law bans the use of the keyboard and manual dialing, it still permits the use of a cell phone. Ostensibly, a driver could be just as distracted now as they have been in the past.

Are police officers exempt from the law? They use cell phones and laptop computers in their cars while driving. While it is possible to train someone to use a weapon effectively, police are no different in their ability to multitask. Thus, should the law not apply equally to them as to civilians.

Studies have shown that it is more dangerous to pull off the highway, make a call and then reenter the highway than it is to make a cell phone call.

There are already measures in place for dealing with careless drivers and accidents. The number of violators likely exceeds the number of non-violators at this point so is this law really just a cash grab like the red light cameras?

But, right or wrong, be prepared.