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Although chatting, emailing and texting are the no-nos of most concern to drivers, the new law also forbids handling display screens unrelated to driving tasks, such as DVD players and laptops.

Q. Will I get a ticket if I'm caught using my hand-held cellphone before Feb. 1, when the government's three-month education period ends?

A. Probably not. But police do have the right to issue a summons to drivers flouting the new rules. That will land you before a justice of the peace, who can issue a \$500 fine immediately.

"If I pulled you over, the things I want to hear are: yes, you're aware of the law and you fully intend to get a headset and you understand this (behaviour) is unsafe. I'd want to see that somebody's making an effort," Villamere said.

Although the Ministry of Transportation says fines of up to \$500 can be imposed, police expect most tickets to be in the \$100 to \$150 range. But in flagrant circumstances, they can hit a distracted driver with a more serious charge, careless or dangerous driving.

Q. Can I still talk on the phone when I'm driving?

A. Yes, if you use a hands-free device such as an earpiece or headset with voice dialling, or a unit that plugs into the car's speaker system or is secured to the rear-view mirror. You can also plug in the earpiece or use the speaker function that comes with many phones.

You may not dial while driving. The test is whether or not you're holding the phone in your hand, said Villamere. If you're dialling, you're holding the phone.

Q. When can I text behind the wheel?

A. Never.



Q. Can I still use my GPS and iPod?

A. Yes, but they must be affixed to the dash or plugged into the car stereo system. Police advise you set your playlist or GPS destination before you start, so you never have to handle the devices en route.

Q. Any exceptions to the rules?

A. Drivers can dial to call 911, or when parked or pulled off the road.

CB radios used by truckers will be phased out within three years, to allow time for the development of hands-free technology.