

[News story: Tens of thousands of drivers get increased fines for using mobiles at wheel](#)

More than 26,000 motorists have been caught using a handheld mobile phone while driving in the first year since harsher penalties came into force.

Among these are 500 novice drivers who have had their licences revoked for using their phone behind the wheel in their first 2 years of driving.

On 1 March 2017, the penalties for this offence doubled from £100 and 3 penalty points to £200 and 6 points.

To coincide with the first anniversary of the new penalties, THINK! is highlighting the chances of being caught in adverts, which will appear on radio, social media, on demand video and in shopping centres, as part of its ongoing campaign to raise awareness of the dangers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78Kpi01LRKM>

Road Safety Minister Jesse Norman said:

The penalties for holding and using a mobile phone while driving have proven to be a strong deterrent, and more and more people are aware of just how dangerous this is.

But some motorists are still not only putting their own lives at risk, but the lives of others.

Everyone has a role to play to encourage drivers to put their phone away and not use it while at the wheel.

A further 1,997 motorists were handed fines as part of a national crackdown by traffic officers between 22 and 28 January 2018, which was choreographed by the National Police Chiefs' Council. Of those caught, 74% were male.

National Lead for Roads Policing, Chief Constable Anthony Bangham said:

In the year since the new legislation was introduced, we have started to see changes in driver behaviour as the public begin to understand the impact that driving whilst using a mobile phone can have. However, there are still far too many people underestimating the risk that they take when using their mobile phone at the wheel.

We used intelligence to identify hotspots and repeat offences to stop over 3000 drivers in one week. 66.5% of which were committing

a mobile phone related offence.

It is not just about the penalty points or the fine, it is about putting safety first and keeping your eyes on the road so you don't risk hurting or killing an innocent person.

RAC road safety spokesman Pete Williams said:

Drivers tell us that their top motoring concern is seeing other people using a handheld mobile phone at the wheel. The introduction of tougher penalties sent a strong signal to offenders and we hope that this, combined with targeted enforcement of the law by police and impactful campaigns from the likes of THINK! and Be Phone Smart, is beginning to encourage a shift in driver behaviour.

Regardless of the efforts by government, the police and road safety campaigners, the decision to pick up a handheld phone – or leave it alone – while driving remains a personal choice that each driver makes. While the temptation may be strong, drivers need to really ask themselves what is so important that they must risk their life, and the lives of others, by using a handheld mobile phone at the wheel.

We encourage all drivers to think about the role their phone plays in the car while they should be focused on driving – and then make a personal promise to stay safe and legal by visiting BePhoneSmart.uk.

After last March's THINK! campaign, 9 in 10 people were aware of the new penalties. The adverts were seen by around 29 million people and social media content was seen by a further 12 million people.

[Last October's Pink Kitten video](#), which highlighted how much you miss if you glance at your phone while driving, reached an audience of about 21 million people.