

May 23, 2012

SPONSOR STATEMENT HB 128

"An Act relating to prohibiting the use of cellular telephones by minors when driving a motor vehicle; and providing for an effective date."

Our automobile insurance rates illustrate the well-established fact that younger and less experience drivers have more vehicle accidents than older drivers. Today, a growing body of evidence shows that use of cell phones increases risk of accident for all drivers, but especially for younger ones.

Each year, Alaska sees an increase in the number of motor vehicle accidents involving the use of cellular phones by drivers. Between 2002 and 2008 there were 399 traffic accidents involving cell phones in Alaska. The largest group, about 36 percent, involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old, although they make up only about 7.4% of Alaskan drivers.

Additionally, people between 16 and 24 are the most frequent cell phone users. While drivers age 21 or older with cell phones are about equally likely to use their cell phones for outgoing calls as they are to take incoming calls, cell phone-using drivers age 16-20 are more likely to use their cell phones to take incoming calls than they are to make outgoing calls while driving.

Other statistics show:

- 16 and 17 year old drivers have the highest fatality rate in car crashes.
- For the 16-to-20 age group, the crash fatality rate in 2004 was nearly twice as high as other age groups
- Motor vehicle crashes are number 1 cause of death among teenagers

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has gathered data that nearly 25% of all vehicle accidents directly involve the use of cell phones. By limiting a minor's use of a cell phone while driving, we can make our roads safer for everyone.