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# Lawmakers Push To Ban Cell Phone Use While Driving

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Down in Juneau there are a handful of different ideas that will outlaw talking on your cell phone while driving.

Some target cell phone users who are younger, and some require everyone to just go with an earpiece.

With these four bills on the table there is a strong push to stop cell phone use while driving to prevent the rise in deadly driver distracted accidents here in Alaska.

An impact that will be felt not just on how you and I will make our calls in the future, but also with local businesses where cell phone use is a crucial part of their work.

In the busy world of the courier business, time and reliability are of the essence.

"We do everything from legal to medical to personal," said Erica Kellar, the Director Of Operations for Anchorage Messenger Services. "We get stat calls for hospitals to pick up blood so we have to get a hold of them immediately stop what they are doing go to the Blood Bank."

Important deliveries that the 47-year-old business leans on cell phones to work. "We are constantly on the phone, constantly," said Kellar. "We couldn't operate without them. We have to communicate with them to explain where they are going, what we have to do."

But with concerns growing about Alaska's adults and young people being at-risk of cell phone-related car accidents, lawmakers say it's time to prevent an accident that doesn't have to happen.

"It's kind of a little scary sometimes driving with them and to have them then use their cell phones, I was scared driving with them," said Randi Spray, an intern for Rep. Berta Gardner of Anchorage who testified about a bill that would ban minors under 18 years old from using cell phones while driving.

"Vehicles are hurdling down the road and that kind of energy in motion can create horrible circumstances, horrible accidents," said Lt. Dave Parker, the spokesperson for the Anchorage

Police Department.

“Distracted driving is implicated with a pretty high percentage of accidents in Alaska,” said Rep. Cathy Munoz, R-Juneau.

Four cell phone driving ban bills are in the Alaska House ranging from only allowing hands-free devices to outright banning teens.

“If we can't agree that all of us should hang up and drive. Let's at least agree that our children should hang up and drive,” said Gardner.

“People are responding more favorably because of specific experiences they've had with unsafe drivers on the roads and I think those experiences really do influence support for the legislation.” said Munoz.

“Virtually all of our officers will be in support of that kind of thing because we've seen what distracting driving can do,” said Parker. “When your attention is diverted from you're driving for more than two seconds at a time. It's similar to driving while intoxicated.”

Something businesses like Anchorage Messenger Services would be okay with so they can be safe while doing their job.

“Hands-free devices are always encouraged that way they can always have both hands on the wheel,” said Kellar. “If we could still have cell phones with hands-free devices, we can still function.”

With only 399 cell phone-related accidents from 2002 through 2008 Rep. Munoz said there is a belief that number is actually higher because law enforcement only can check two boxes out of 27 when stating a cause of accident.

And with 16 percent of those accidents fatal, he said that's reason enough to require restrictions of use while driving.

Rep. Munoz's and Rep. Gardner's bills are still in committee with no timetable set to when they would be voted on.