



Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Lisette Camilo, DCAS Commissioner
Keith T. Kerman, Chief Fleet Officer

MAY 13, 2016

ISSUE 139

NYC BANS USE OF HANDS-FREE PHONES BY CITY FLEET DRIVERS KEITH KERMAN

On May 12, 2016, Mayor Bill de Blasio and DCAS Commissioner Lisette Camilo announced a new policy banning use of hands-free devices by City fleet drivers. This policy goes into effect immediately and will be reflected in amended fleet rules to be published today and available on the DCAS fleet website. This is an important step forward toward improving the safety of City fleet operations. The change was announced at the 28th Annual City Fleet Show at Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

As per the National Safety Council, distracted driving involving mobile devices causes 26% of all collisions nationwide. DCAS has worked with Dr. Linda Hill of University of California-San Diego, Volpe at US DOT, and others, to assess the safety of driving while using hands-free devices. Until yesterday, City Fleet policy mirrored NY State Law which bans hand-held cell phone use and texting but allows drivers to use hands-free devices.

The government and academic research reviewed by DCAS, along with basic common-sense, argues convincingly that driving while talking on a hands-free phone can be just as dangerous and distracting as using a hand-held phone or texting. The only safe driving is focused driving, and that is what we will ask of City drivers. The new rule change will not impact the state exemptions involving 911 emergency calls or emergency police and fire operations.

DCAS will be posting our report on this issue online. The new rule will be a focus of mandatory defensive driving and safety training going forward for all City fleet operators. We will also be rolling out a poster campaign focusing on this issue at City facilities, parking lots, and garages. As with all fleet rules, we rely on and ask for the support of City operational supervisors, and vehicle passengers, in helping to promote and enforce this important safety change. The general public can reach out to 311 to report any possible unsafe use or misuse of a City vehicle.

It's far better to take the time to pull over and make a phone call than risk your own and others' safety by driving when your focus is elsewhere on a call.

Thanks to Mahanth Joishy at DCAS who led the research into this issue and policy change. We look forward to working with all 50 fleet operating agencies as we implement this and other safety improvements.

More on other developments at the annual fleet show in future newsletters.

SAFE DRIVING IS FOCUSED DRIVING! NO CELL PHONES INCLUDING HANDS FREE AND NO TEXTING WHILE DRIVING.

