

SAFETY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR 3

PERCENTAGE OF MOBILE PHONE USAGE COMPLIANCE



Sep 2024

Safety Performance Indicator (SPI) 3 measures the percentage of drivers complying with mobile phone use laws*.

WHY NOT HANDLING A PHONE WHILE DRIVING IS IMPORTANT

Using a mobile phone while driving impairs a range of driving skills such as reaction time, keeping an appropriate following distance, and maintaining lane control.

Research has found being distracted while driving and taking your eyes off the road for only two seconds can make you twice as likely to be involved in a crash.

2 seconds distraction =
2X crash risk

Similarly, using a mobile phone while driving can make you up to four times more likely to be involved in a casualty crash (Monash University Accident Research Centre, 2003).



Between 2013 – 2023 there have been 718 fatal and serious injuries from crashes where distraction was a factor. Based on data in the same period, on average distraction is a crash factor in 22 per cent of all fatal and serious injuries that occur on our roads each year.

There are difficulties around being able to determine if someone was using their phone at the time of a crash. This can lead there to be inaccurate crash data around mobile phone use and crashes. Increasing the level of compliance with mobile phone use laws will help reduce the level of road trauma associated to inattention and distraction on Tasmanian roads.

HOW THIS INDICATOR IS MEASURED

* This SPI measures compliance through observational survey of a representative sample of drivers, where compliance is defined as drivers not handling a mobile phone while they operate their vehicle. In the survey drivers were observed for mobile phone device compliance, where the mobile phone is not being handled (held), (excluding touching a phone in a mount or holder). Conditions for the representative sample and information collection were informed by best practice methodological guidance, including undertaking observational surveys at a range of locations and times.

Tasmanian road rules state it is illegal to do any of the following when driving:

- hold a mobile phone in your hand or rest it on any part of your body (whether or not you are on a phone call)
- type/enter anything into a mobile phone, or send or look at anything that is on a mobile phone
- turn a mobile phone on or off
- operate any other function of a mobile phone.

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PROGRESS ON COMPLIANCE

An observational survey of mobile phone use compliance in 2023 showed that most drivers observed were not handling a mobile phone (97%). Although this survey shows a high level of compliance, there is still a road safety benefit to be achieved.

If the level of non-compliance (3%) is considered relative to the total number of licensed drivers this indicates approximately 13,000 licensed Tasmanian drivers may continue to handle their mobile phones illegally while driving. As an example, this level of non-compliance could mean if observing the Brooker Highway for an hour at 4pm on a typical day, of all the vehicles that pass by there could be 128 vehicles passing by where the driver is using their phone illegally.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to targeting illegal mobile phone use on Tasmanian roads.

- Automated Traffic Enforcement (ATE) technologies are utilised to detect illegal mobile phone use on our roads.
- The Road Safety Advisory Council (RSAC), supported by the Motor Accident Insurance Board (MAIB), undertake targeted campaigns to influence behaviour change around illegal mobile phone use.
- Enforcement continues to play an important role in targeting non-compliant mobile phone use while driving. For example, Tasmania Police caught 22 drivers using mobile phones during a 90-minute period in Hobart CBD, in February 2024.

- The target direction for SPI 3 is an increasing level of compliance.
- Based on a sample in 2023 SPI 3 = 97 per cent of mobile phone use compliance.