Teens beware of texting while driving

Ohio's texting and driving law took full effect last Friday, March 1, with primary enforcement for teen drivers and secondary enforcement for drivers over 18.

Under the new law, police officers can pull over drivers under the age of 18 suspected of texting and driving or talking on a cell phone. Teens caught using any electronic wireless communications device while driving in Ohio – whether for texting, sending email, or talking – face a $150 fine and 60-day license suspension for the first offense. The fine for teens doubles with a second offense and the license suspension lasts one year.

There is secondary enforcement for drivers over 18, meaning drivers must first be stopped for another traffic violation, such as speeding or weaving, before being cited for texting while driving. Adult drivers caught using a handheld electronic wireless communication device to write, send, or read a text will face a misdemeanor fine of up to $150 dollars.

Thirty-nine states now have bans on texting behind the wheel. All but four have primary enforcement for all drivers.

A recent survey of Ohio AAA members shows very strong support for the idea of all drivers being subject to primary enforcement.

“We hope the new law in Ohio will help prevent the dangerous and potentially deadly practice of texting behind the wheel,” said Brian Newbacher, director of public affairs for AAA East Central. “Focusing on teens is a good start and we agree with AAA members that all drivers should face tougher enforcement.”

AAA launched a state-wide billboard campaign this week to remind motorists of the new law. Space for approximately 60 billboards was donated as a public service by Clear Channel Outdoor and Lamar Advertising.