

New rules now in effect ? Ontario has strengthened penalties for distracted driving

The rules of the road have been updated in Ontario this week to help keep Ontarians safe.

The Province has announced changes include tougher penalties for distracted driving, new rules to protect cyclists and measures to ensure the safety of tow truck drivers and children riding school buses.

Getting tougher on distracted driving

Penalties for distracted driving will include an increased set fine of \$490 and three demerit points upon conviction. Novice drivers will receive a minimum 30-day suspension for the first conviction and longer suspensions for subsequent convictions.

Keeping cyclists safe

The 'dooring' of cyclists will carry an increased set fine of \$365 and three demerit points upon conviction. New rules will also require drivers to leave a one-metre distance where possible when passing cyclists, or they may face the penalty of a \$110 set fine and two demerit points. Cyclists who don't use the required bicycle lights and reflectors face a higher set fine of \$110.

Staying alert around tow trucks

and school buses

Drivers must now leave a safe passing distance between themselves and tow trucks stopped on the roadside to provide assistance. Failing to slow down and move over for a tow truck can result in a set fine of \$490. School buses will be more recognizable ? they will now be the only buses permitted to be chrome yellow.

Ensuring Ontario's roads and highways are safe is part of the government's economic plan for Ontario. The four-part plan includes investing in people's talents and skills, making the largest investment in public infrastructure in Ontario's history, creating a dynamic, innovative environment where business thrives and building a secure retirement savings plan.

If current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may exceed those from drinking and driving by 2016.

Research indicates that a driver who uses a cell phone is four times more likely to be in a crash.

An estimated 1.2 million Ontarians ride a bicycle on a daily basis. A bike must have a white front light and a red rear light or reflector if you ride between 30 minutes before sunset and 30 minutes after sunrise, and white reflective tape on the front forks and red reflective tape on rear forks.

Drivers failing to stop for a school bus can be fined up to \$2,000 and six demerit points for a first conviction.

'Ontario's roads are among the safest in North America, and we want to keep it that way,' commented Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca. 'We will continue to work hard to curb distracted driving, protect cyclists, and improve the safety of tow truck operators and children riding school buses.'