



**ADVOCATES**  
for Highway & Auto Safety

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## **Safety Advocates Respond to U.S. DOT Secretary's Announcement on Measures to Reduce Distracted Driving by Commercial Operators**

**Statement by Jacqueline S. Gillan, Vice President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety**

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety welcomes today's announcement by the U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood for taking quick and decisive action on banning texting and restricting cell phone use by operators of commercial motor vehicles. Advocates recently filed a petition for rulemaking requesting consideration of such action on the use of a wide array of electronic devices used by commercial drivers. There is convincing and compelling research that wireless electronic devices dramatically increase the risk of truck and bus crashes. The Secretary's action to stop the dangerous practice of truck and motorcoach drivers texting while driving as well as restricting cell phone use will reduce crashes, save lives, and avoid thousands of injuries to commercial operators and motorists sharing the same roads.

We also applaud President Obama's Executive Order that prohibits government employees from driving while distracted because of cell phone use. That action helps to set a standard for responsible driving that can save lives and should be emulated by other motorists across the U.S.

The President's order and the Secretary's actions represent important first steps toward reducing distracted driving on our roads. Advocates' petition requested the Secretary to also consider banning or restricting the use of other electronic devices commonly used by commercial drivers that are also highly distracting and increase the risk of crashes. We look forward to the Secretary's positive response to the remainder of our petition.

Restricting the use of these other electronic devices would complement the Secretary's sweeping action today to prohibit the use of all electronic and electrical devices by rail crews. Furthermore, since Secretary LaHood has imposed the severe penalty on school bus drivers of losing their commercial driving licenses if they are detected to be driving while distracted, we look forward to a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulation specifying tough sanctions to be imposed on truck and motorcoach drivers if they are found to be driving while texting or talking on cell phones. We know from experience that safe driving practices can be achieved with the combination of sound education, strong rules and severe penalties.

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