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#### Heads Up Phones Down - Statewide Handheld Ban Takes Effect October 1

MONTPELIER, Vt.—September 15, 2014—On Monday, October 1, 2014, Vermont will become the 15<sup>th</sup> state to ban the use of any handheld portable electronic device while driving. The new law carries fines of up to \$200 with points assessed if the violation occurs in a work zone. It is already illegal to use a handheld electronic device while traveling in a work zone and texting is prohibited statewide. Use of a mobile device will be permitted if an approved hands-free technology such as Bluetooth is properly installed, but the ban on junior operators using cell phones remains in place. The Province of Quebec and New York State have each had a handheld ban in effect for several years. New Hampshire's ban will take effect in July of 2015.

"We understand this is a major adjustment for Vermonters and visitors alike," said Vermont Secretary of Transportation, Brian Searles. "But driving is serious business. Distracted driving has reached epidemic proportions nationally and here in New England where we have additional challenges related to winter driving. Anything we can do to reduce the number of distractions in vehicles is a step in the right direction."

Hands-free use is permitted under the law. Hands-free means the portable electronic device is not in the hands of the driver. Devices can be used by employing an internal feature such as Bluetooth or a wired headset with a single-button control, or a speakerphone. The device itself can be used for single button hands-free operation, as long as the device is in a cradle or otherwise securely mounted in the vehicle. The ban is lifted when the driver needs to communicate with law enforcement or emergency service personnel in an emergency.

Violators shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$100.00 and not more than \$200.00 for a first violation, and of not less than \$250.00 and not more than \$500.00 for a second or subsequent violation within any two-year period. If the violation occurs within a properly designated work zone in which construction, maintenance, or utility personnel are present, two points will be assessed against the violators' license for a first conviction and five points assessed on subsequent convictions.

Many state agencies are working to get the word out to drivers before October 1<sup>st</sup>. VTrans is kicking off a statewide public education campaign this week to do just that in partnership with the Vermont Department of Motor Vehicles, Vermont State Police, Governor's Highway Safety Program, and other state agencies. VTrans has also partnered with the Vermont Highway Safety Alliance – a public/private partnership of safety stakeholders ranging from AARP to AAA and the Youth Safety Council to the Auto Dealers Association in this effort.

To learn more about how to comply with the new law including answers to frequently asked questions, go to [highwaysafety.vermont.gov/phonesdown](http://highwaysafety.vermont.gov/phonesdown) #phonesdownvt