

ARTICLE

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Technology Helping Or Hurting Drivers?



On behalf of Michael Epstein at The Epstein Law Firm, P.A.

As a result of today's mobile technology, drivers have a number of distractions while driving. A New Jersey teen is blaming his GPS for a recent accident, claiming it instructed him to take an illegal turn that ultimately caused a four-car crash. The teen driver was heading westbound on a separated

highway when his GPS directed him to turn left onto a crossing street. Turns are illegal at the intersection and the teen's car struck another, ultimately causing four cars to collide.

Convenience Or A Distraction?

News of this accident demonstrates how technology intended to make life more convenient can do just the opposite by distracting us from the task at hand. When the task is driving, life and limb are at stake. Cell phones, navigation systems and even the car radio can distract us just long enough for an accident to occur.

In 2004, New Jersey enacted a law prohibiting the use of cell phones while driving without the use of a hands-free feature, becoming only the second state to do so. The law made driving while using a cell phone a secondary offense, meaning police could only issue a ticket for using a cell phone if they were stopping the driver for another reason.

In 2007, New Jersey modified the law to make it a primary offense. As a result, police can pull a driver over and issue a ticket as soon as the officer spots a driver using their cell phone. The only exceptions to the ban are emergency situations such as when the driver has reason to believe their safety is at risk or that a criminal act may be committed against them or another person.

The penalty for using a cell phone in New Jersey is \$100, but no points will be added to the driver's license. Using the phone to send or receive any kind of electronic message, including text messages and e-mails, is also a violation of the law.

Countless other serious accidents have been caused by drivers using new technology behind the wheel. Therefore, drivers in New Jersey and elsewhere need to be careful when using technology while driving. In addition, a distracted driver who causes an accident is most likely going to be liable for injuries or damages caused from the accident.