

Calif. enacts stricter phone-driving rules

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

Starting today, drivers no longer will be allowed to hold their cellphones in their hands for any reason, including using any of a phone's apps, such as music playlists.

"The whole idea is you don't have the phone in your hand, period," said Assemblyman Bill Quirk, D-Hayward, author of the new law, which he says should make it easier for officers to stop and cite drivers for illegal phone use.

Quirk's bill, AB1785, plugged what safety officials called a major loophole in the state's groundbreaking hands-free cellphone laws. Those laws ban talking and texting on handheld phones while driving. But any other handheld use of a phone, such as shooting videos or scanning Facebook, has been technically legal.

Under the new law, drivers can still use their cellphones if they do it hands-free, which often means voice activated and operated.

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