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### **Penalties for Using a Mobile Phone at the Wheel set to double**

The South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership is again warning motorists of the dangers of using their mobile phones whilst driving, as the penalties for doing so are set to double on 1 March.

From 1 March, drivers caught using a hand held mobile phone while driving will see the penalty increased from three points and a £100 fine to six points and a £200 fine. The changes mean that newly qualified drivers – who can only gain six points before being banned – risk losing their licences if caught using their phone.

Studies show that drivers using a hands-free or handheld mobile phone are slower at recognising and reacting to hazards. Even careful drivers can be distracted by a call or text – and a split-second lapse in concentration could result in a crash.

A government consultation in 2016 found overwhelming support for increasing the fines and penalty points for drivers using hand-held mobile phones. In addition, the findings of an RAC report on motoring suggest a significant worsening in both attitude and behaviour among drivers to using a mobile for making calls and checking social media.

Joanne Wehrle, Safer Roads Education Manager said, “Using a mobile phone, sat nav or any similar device whilst driving means that the driver’s attention is distracted from the road. It is hoped that increasing the fine from £100 to £200 and doubling the penalty points from three to six will make people think twice about using their mobile phone at the wheel and help to deter them from doing it.”

Drivers who are caught twice for the offence will automatically appear in court and face a fine of £1,000 and a driving ban of at least 6 months.

Over the next few months, the Safer Roads Partnership will be promoting the changes to the penalties at events and via a range of training sessions being delivered to drivers. They will support and promote the Police’s enforcement campaigns around mobile phone use as well as promote the message via billboard messages across the county.

The Department for Transport has also confirmed it will launch a hard hitting THINK! campaign on the dangers of mobile phone use while driving to raise awareness of the changes.

**Ends**

## **Note to Editors**

The South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership is made up of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield Councils, Highways England, SYPTTE, the University of Sheffield, the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, public health bodies, South Yorkshire Police (including South Yorkshire Safety Cameras), Peak District National Park Authority and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

The aim of the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership is to reduce the number of people injured in road traffic collisions and make South Yorkshire roads safer.

The Partnership Team is available to provide advice, training, support and information on a variety of topics including safety for pedestrians, cyclists, powered two wheeled riders and drivers. If you would like some road safety advice, please visit us at [www.lifewise999.co.uk/road-safety](http://www.lifewise999.co.uk/road-safety) or email [saferroads@southyorks.pnn.police.uk](mailto:saferroads@southyorks.pnn.police.uk)

## **Press / media opportunities**

Further information can be found by visiting the Lifewise website at [www.lifewise999.co.uk/road-safety](http://www.lifewise999.co.uk/road-safety) , calling 01709 832462 or by following on Twitter at @safer\_roads

For all media enquiries or to request interviews please contact:

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