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If you don't have a hands-free device you can't talk on your cellular telephone while driving through an active school zone in Burleson. This change will go into effect inside the city limits of Burleson as soon as the signs explaining that restriction, are posted.

Monday night, Burleson City Council members approved funding the signs (\$1,500-\$1,800 total) to be placed at the entrance to each school crossing zone to alert drivers to the new restriction. The signs will be in place by mid-October. The City's street department is installing approximately 50 signs on main streets and side streets around school campuses.

The ban on the use of cell phones is statewide. House Bill 55 makes it illegal to use a wireless communication device in a school zone unless the vehicle is stopped or a hands-free device is used. "Use of a wireless communication device" includes texting, reading or answering e-mails, and any and all other functions of a cellular telephone.

Cities, like Burleson, or counties wanting to enforce this law must post a sign at the beginning of each school zone to inform drivers that using a wireless communications device is prohibited and the operator is subject to a fine.

The first ban on cell phone usage in school zones was enacted by the City of Highland Park in November 2007. The state law, which went into effect on Sept. 1, 2009, ensures consistency across communities.

The Burleson Independent School District's board of trustees wrote a letter to the Burleson City Council in support of the ban, saying "we believe that this change will reduce the chance of accidents in this highly congested timeframe around our schools. A change in driver behavior is the goal of this new signage."

School zones are located on Alsbury Boulevard, McAlister Boulevard, Thomas Street, Renfro Street, Hurst Road, Evelyn Lane, Johnson Avenue, Blayke Street, Summercrest Boulevard, Hillside Drive, Elk Drive and Pleasant Manor.

Operators of authorized emergency vehicles and operators licensed by the Federal Communications Commission are not affected by the new state law. The bill does prohibit a school bus driver from using a wireless communication device under any circumstance unless the vehicle is stopped.

Violation of the law is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than \$50.