

ORDINANCE NO. 2016-394

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DENTON, TEXAS AMENDING SECTION 18-38 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES RELATING TO THE USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES TO PROHIBIT THE USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES WHILE OPERATING A VEHICLE; PROVIDING A REPEALER CLAUSE; PROVIDING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; PROVIDING FOR A PENALTY AS A CLASS C MISDEMEANOR FOR VIOLATIONS OF THIS ORDINANCE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Denton City Council finds that there are significant risks relating to the distracted operating of vehicles that include various aspects of the use of wireless communication devices while operating on the public roadways within the City; and

WHEREAS, prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices while operating a vehicle in the City of Denton, to the extent allowed by §545.425(f), Texas Transportation Code, addresses the possible hazards produced by a distracted driver as the result of: (1) sending or reading text messages or instant messages; (2) viewing or accessing internet sites; or (3) viewing or accessing other data that uses commonly recognized electronic communications protocol; and

WHEREAS, this ordinance is drafted to address the City of Denton police power interests in the regulation of public safety, and appropriately excludes acts for which the City is preempted from regulating, and provides defenses to prosecution to the application of the ordinance, including allowing the use of hands-free devices, while a vehicle is stopped, and communications by operators of authorized emergency vehicles; NOW, THEREFORE,

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DENTON HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. The findings and recitations contained in the preamble of this ordinance are incorporated herein by reference as true.

SECTION 2. Section 18-38 "Use of wireless communication devices while operating a vehicle" is hereby amended to read as follows:

**Sec. 18-38 Use of wireless communication devices while operating a vehicle.**

- (a) In this section, a "*Hands-free device*" means speakerphone capability or a telephone attachment to other piece of equipment, regardless of whether permanently installed in/on the vehicle, that allows use of the wireless device without use of either of the operator's hands, except for the use of the operator's hands for the purpose of answering or terminating a voice telephone call.
- (b) In this section, "*Stop*" or "*Stopped*" means to halt an occupied or unoccupied vehicle: (1) in a location other than a lane of traffic on a roadway; (2) in a lane of traffic on a roadway pursuant to the direction of a traffic control device; or (3) otherwise lawfully stopped in a lane of traffic on a roadway.

- (c) In this section, "vehicle" shall have the meaning set forth in Section 541.201 (23) of the Texas Transportation Code.
- (d) In this section, "*Wireless Communication Device*" has the meaning assigned in Section 545.425 (Use of Wireless Communication Device; Offense) of the Texas Transportation Code.
- (e) An operator of a vehicle may not use a wireless communication device for any purpose while operating a vehicle on any street or highway within the City of Denton, unless employing a hands-free device.
- (f) This ordinance does not apply to an operator of a vehicle using a wireless communication device:
  - 1. For initiating or terminating a telephone call while the vehicle is stopped; or
  - 2. For initiating or terminating navigation with mapping software or a global positioning system, while the vehicle is stopped; or
  - 3. By an operator of an authorized emergency vehicle using a wireless communication device while acting in an official capacity; or
  - 4. By an operator who is licensed by the Federal Communications Commission operating a radio frequency device other than a wireless communication device.
- (g) It is an affirmative defense to prosecution of an offense under this section if a wireless communication device is used:
  - 1. For obtaining emergency assistance to report a traffic accident, medical emergency, or serious traffic hazard, or to prevent a crime about to be committed or being committed; or
  - 2. In the reasonable belief that a person's life or safety is in immediate danger.
- (h) To the extent that this section conflicts with the Texas Transportation Code Section 545.424, regarding the use of wireless communication devices while operating a vehicle by minors, or Texas Transportation Code Section 545.425, regarding the use of wireless communications devices in school zones or by the operators of school busses, this section does not apply.

SECTION 3. If any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word in this ordinance, or application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, such holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance, and the City Council of the City of Denton, Texas hereby declares it would have enacted such remaining portions despite any invalidity.

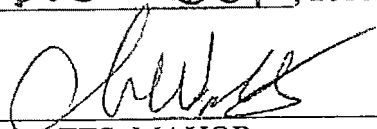
SECTION 4. Save and except as amended hereby, all the provisions, sections, subsections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses, and phrases of the Code of Ordinances shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 5. Any person found guilty of violating this Ordinance by a court of competent jurisdiction shall be guilty of a Class C misdemeanor.

SECTION 6. Ordinance 2014-112 shall remain in full force and effect until the effective date of this ordinance.

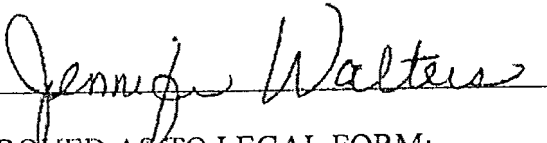
SECTION 7. This Ordinance providing for a penalty shall become effective June 1, 2017, and the City Secretary is hereby directed to cause the caption of this ordinance to be published twice in the *Denton Record-Chronicle*, the official newspaper of the City of Denton, Texas, within 10 days of the date of its passage.

PASSED AND APPROVED this the 6 day of December, 2016.

  
CHRIS WATTS, MAYOR

ATTEST:  
JENNIFER WALTERS, CITY SECRETARY

BY:



APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM:  
ANITA BURGESS, CITY ATTORNEY

BY:

