



[California Highway Patrol](#)

[Commissioner's Welcome](#)

[Q & A](#)

[Publications](#)

[What We Do](#)

[Offices](#)

[News and Public Notices](#)

[History](#)

[Careers](#)

[Traffic Incidents](#)

[Related Sites](#)

[Site Map](#)

- [Reference](#)
- [Shoulder Patch](#)
- [Our Badge](#)

California Highway Patrol

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Answers to Most Frequently Asked Questions

Is it illegal to use my cellular telephone while I'm driving?

Present California law does not prohibit the use of a wireless telephone while operating a vehicle. However, the CHP recommends common sense in its use and we urge users to familiarize themselves with their cellular telephone features and follow these tips:

- If possible, dial while the car is not in motion, such as at a traffic light or stop sign.
- Learn to operate the phone without looking at it.
- Never allow a phone conversation to distract you from driving.
- Keep calls brief.
- While talking, keep your head up and your eyes on the road, with frequent checks of side and rearview mirrors.
- Use a hands-free device when available.
- Don't take notes or look up phone numbers while driving.
- If you must check information, arrange to call back and do your research while the car is safely stopped.

Can I put after-market tinting on the windows of my vehicle?

The main requirements for legal window tinting in California are:

1. The windshield and front driver's side and passenger's side windows cannot receive any aftermarket tinting.
2. If the rear window of a vehicle is tinted, the vehicle must have outside rearview mirrors on both sides.

The law prohibits any person from driving any motor vehicle with any object or material placed, displayed, installed, affixed, or applied upon the windshield or side or rear windows, with certain limited exceptions.

However, legislation signed into law effective January 1, 1999, exempts from the above prohibition specified clear, colorless, and transparent material that is installed, affixed, or applied to the front driver and passenger side windows for the specific purpose of reducing ultraviolet rays. If, as, or when this material becomes torn, bubbled or otherwise worn, it must be removed or replaced.

Can motorcycle riders "split" lanes and ride between other vehicles?

Lane splitting by motorcycles is permissible but must be done in a safe and prudent manner.

I'm pregnant. The HOV lane requires two persons in a vehicle. Now that I'm eating for two, can I use this lane?

California law requires that in order to utilize the HOV lane, there must be two (or, if posted, three) separate individuals occupying seats in a vehicle. Until your "passenger" is capable of riding in his or her own seat, you cannot count them.

I will be traveling to California and want to carry my weapon. I currently have a concealed weapon permit. How can I legally transport my weapon while driving through the state?

California does not recognize Concealed Weapon Permits from other states. If you wish to transport a weapon during your visit, it must be carried unloaded in a locked container separate from the passenger compartment. Any ammunition must also be kept in a location which is separate from the weapon.