

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6265

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, February 7, 2000

**Title:** An act relating to accident reports.

**Brief Description:** Including information on cell phone usage in accident reports.

**Sponsors:** Senators Eide, Haugen, Kline, Swecker, Gardner, Rasmussen, Costa, Kohl-Welles, Brown, Patterson, McAuliffe, Prentice and Jacobsen.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 1/25/2000, 2/7/2000 [DPS, DNPS].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6265 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Goings, Vice Chair; Costa, Eide, Heavey, Jacobsen, Patterson, Prentice, Sheahan and Shin.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass substitute.

Signed by Senators Benton, Finkbeiner, Horn, Johnson, Morton, Sellar, T. Sheldon and Swecker.

**Staff:** Lynn Hale (786-7346)

**Background:** Cellular telephones are an important factor in highway safety. Cellular telephones are increasingly being used to report emergencies, convey information about hazardous road conditions, and report aggressive or drunk drivers. However, there is growing concern that the use of cellular telephones while driving increases the risk of the driver being involved in an accident. A 1997 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that talking on a cellular telephone while driving quadrupled the risk of an accident and was almost as dangerous as being drunk behind the wheel. The Legislature would like to determine how often cellular telephones are in use during auto accidents.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The reporting officer must indicate on the accident report form, in the section provided for narrative comments, whether or not either driver was using a mobile telephone while operating either vehicle.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The information concerning whether either driver was using a mobile telephone while operating either vehicle must be indicated in the section provided for narrative comments.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 20, 2000.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** The use of cell phones while driving quadruples the risk of being involved in an accident. There is concern that drivers are inattentive when talking on cell phones and driving.

**Testimony Against:** Many other factors also contribute to driver inattentiveness and should also be studied. We should be focused on educating the public about the appropriate use of cell phones while driving. A survey may provide inaccurate or useless information concerning cell phone usage in auto accidents.

**Testified:** PRO: Senator Eide, prime sponsor; Robert Rigaey; CON: Steve Gano, AT&T Wireless; Cliff Webster, AirTouch Communications; Captain Eric Robertson, Washington State Patrol (concern).