

# HOLD THE PHONE RUNS THE RISK OF FINE

DRIVERS are rushing to buy in-car mobile phone holders to beat new road rules that ban motorists from touching their phone.

Authorities warn there will be no grace period for drivers who flout the rules that come into effect from Thursday.

The only way motorists will be able to use their phone to make or receive calls is if it's sitting in a cradle mounted on the dash.

The changes mean drivers who have their phones resting on their lap could be hit with a \$298 fine and the loss of three demerit points.

Centre for Road Safety general manager Marg Prendergast said drivers who were caught holding their phones had no excuse.

"Under the old rules you weren't allowed to touch your phone and these changes simply give drivers clarification on how they can use their phone," Ms Prendergast said.

"Drivers weren't given direction how they could use their phone if they needed to."

Changes mean thousands will need to buy a cradle for their phone, with DIY solutions not passing muster.

"Sticking it on with Blu Tack or Velcro isn't going to cut it," she said. "It has to be a commercially designed and manufactured for that purpose (of holding a phone)."



A number of technology shops contacted by The Daily Telegraph said motorists were already moving to beat the law change. Auburn Supercheap Auto manager Jitin Sidana said demand for the kits began picking up last week.

"We have been selling lots," Mr Sidana said.

"I had five or six customers come in (last Friday) talking about the new rules and wanting to buy a holder."

The changes also clarify what you can and can't use your smartphone for, even if it is in a holder. If it's in a cradle you can still use it as a GPS unit, to play music and to make and receive calls, but texting, checking emails and watching videos on the go are out.

If it's not in a cradle the only way you can touch it is to pass it to a passenger.

Learner and P1 drivers cannot use their phone at all, as per the previous rules.

More than 42,000 drivers in NSW were caught using their mobiles in the last financial year. "We know that it's impossible to text and drive, but people continue to do it," Ms Prendergast said.

"The danger is when you take your eyes off the road."

