

Mobile phone ban for Dutch cyclists

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The sight of cyclists hurtling along while glued to their smartphones is a common one in the bike-mad Netherlands, but it will soon be illegal.

With a growing number of [accidents](#) involving phones and bikes, the government is to ban the use of all but hands-free devices while cycling.

"It is forbidden to use a mobile electronic device while driving any vehicle (including a bicycle)," says the draft law announced by Transport Minister Cora van Nieuwenhuizen late Tuesday.

The bike law will take effect from July next year.

Car and lorry drivers are already banned from using mobiles at the wheel unless they are in hands-free mode, with a maximum fine of 230 euros (\$260), but the new law specifically mentions bikes.

The fine is likely to be the same for cyclists but the government is awaiting the result of a public consultation, Nieuwenhuizen said.

"It's just as dangerous on a bike and on all types of vehicles as it is in a car," she said. "The fact is that

when you are on the road you have to pay full attention and not send messages or do other things on the [phone](#)."

Michael Kulkens, who has campaigned for a ban since his 13-year-old son Tommy-Boy was killed in a bike accident while looking at a phone in 2015, welcomed the change in the law.

"I had to stop my car at the side of the road and the tears welled up in my eyes when I heard on the radio that the ban on the bike is coming," De Telegraaf newspaper quoted him as saying.

"In my mind, I said: 'We did it Tommy-Boy. We did it'."

Cycling is a way of life in the Netherlands, where bikes outnumber people, with an estimated nearly 23 million cycles for some 17 million people.

But while it boasts outstanding infrastructure for cyclists across its flat landscape, the use of mobile phones is a growing hazard, with a smartphone involved in one in five bike accidents involving young people, according to the Dutch Road Safety organisation.

Nelly Vollebregt, president of the Dutch [road](#) accident victims association, who is herself in a wheelchair after a bike accident caused by a motorist who was looking at a phone, said that 25 percent of the 613 people who died on Dutch roads last year were killed by distractions.

Last year the Dutch town of Bodegraven launched a trial of foot-level traffic lights for pedestrians to prevent them straying into roads or cycle lanes while glued to their mobile screens.

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