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Judiciary Expanded "Payable" Ticket List To Include Driving while Using Hand-held Cell Phone

The New Jersey Judiciary on Sept. 1 expanded the list of "payable" traffic tickets to include NJSA 39:4-97.3, driving while using a hand-held cell phone. The so-called "cell phone ban" was added to the list of hundreds of traffic and other violations that can be paid online or by mail. Payment for cell phone tickets is \$130 in fines and court costs.

Drivers who wish to plead guilty and pay any traffic tickets online or by mail may log on to [NJMCDirect.com](#). The program tells users if tickets can be paid without going to court and, if so, the total amount due, including fines and court costs. Drivers who wish to pay online may follow the step-by-step instructions to complete the transaction.

Drivers also may call the municipal court administrator's office where tickets were issued to learn if they are payable and how much is due. The Judiciary's Web site, at [njcourtsonline.com](#), maintains a complete list of payable violations. Locate the list by using the quick site index to find "traffic tickets." The list, called the [Statewide Violations Bureau Schedule](#), is in chronological order by statute number and lists the amount due for each payable violation.

Drivers who wish to plead "not guilty" must appear in court. The judge will hear the case and, for drivers who are found guilty, the judge will impose a fine within the statutory range. For driving while using a hand-held cell phone, fines range between \$100 and \$250.

The administrative director of the courts sets the payable amounts listed in the Statewide Violations Bureau Schedule. While some violations have one statutory fine, many have a range of fines defined in law. The administrative director determines an appropriate amount within the range and sets the fine, along with standard court costs, in the violations schedule. This is intended to provide some convenience to drivers who wish to plead guilty and do not want to have to go to court.

Some violations require a court appearance. Those are not listed on the schedule of payable tickets, cannot be paid by mail and will not be accepted by the NJMCDirect.

New Jersey's online payment system is rapidly growing and now accounts for about 10 percent of municipal court transactions. Paying online instantly updates court records and Motor Vehicle Commission records, providing up-to-the-minute information to drivers and to law enforcement officials. NJMCDirect started in January 2002 as a pilot program for three towns. Today, all 567 New Jersey municipalities are part of the system.

Through NJMCDirect, New Jersey's Municipal Courts collected more than \$36.5 million in fines and court costs for 760,000 tickets between January 2002 and the end of August 2004. In recent months, about 50,000 drivers monthly have been using the system and collection averages about \$2.6 million each month. Drivers pay a small convenience fee of between \$2 and \$4.

