

Hands-free driving law took effect July 1

Iowa’s new hands free driving law prohibiting hand-held device usage while driving went into effect on July 1, with an initial warning period through Dec. 31, 2025. Law enforcement and public safety groups, like the Iowa Department of Public Safety, Iowa Governor’s Traffic and Safety Bureau and the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, will be working to educate the public about the new law during this six-month warning period. Starting Jan. 1, 2026, citations will be issued, carrying a \$100 fine and considered a moving violation.

Gov. Kim Reynolds signed bill SF 22 into law on April 2, making Iowa the 31st state in the nation to enact hands-free legislation. Hands-free means you can’t use your phone in any way. You can’t manually scroll, type or interact with your phone; enter an address into GPS; stream videos or make video calls; view social media; or text or dial unless using hands-free or voice activation.

The previous law prohibited writing, sending or viewing electronic messages. The new law expands those restrictions to the use of all handheld or manual use of electronic devices such as phones, tablets or gaming devices.

To be hands-free, connect your phone to the auxiliary jack to use voice commands or one-touch control, using audio through your car speakers. Bluetooth devices like speakers, earpieces or adapters let you go hands-free without wires. Use a vehicle vent clip or cup holder mount to secure your phone, then use commands or a single tap. Turn on speakerphone and set your phone in a secure spot to comply with hands-free laws.

Learn more at DriveSmartIowa.com.



Main Street buzzes for Light up the Night

Elkader’s downtown came alive for the third annual Light Up the Night on June 27. Main Street buzzed with energy as community members of all ages gathered to enjoy live music by Brad and Kate and family fun under the glowing lights. (Photos by Willis Patenaude)

Community worship in Garnavillo

Join a community worship service on Sunday, July 6, at 9:30 a.m., in the Garnavillo City Park. The service will be held on the shaded west side of the city park between the shelter and the gym. Please bring your lawn chairs for seating. In case of rain, the service will be held in the school gym. All are welcome.

McGregor implements new riverfront parking regulations

The city of McGregor has implemented updated riverside parking lot guidelines following approval by the city council earlier this year. These changes are intended to improve traffic flow, increase parking availability and enhance the overall visitor experience along the riverfront during the busy summer season.

Per the changes, riverside parking is allowed daily from 5 a.m. to 12 a.m. between May 15 and Oct. 15.

The boat ramp area (from the railroad tracks to the river’s edge) is reserved strictly for boat launching and quick access. General parking is not permitted in this area.

Trailer, RV, motorhome and overflow parking is available at the First Street Parking Lot near the grain elevator, where there is ample space and a 72-hour parking limit.

One designated stall near the boat ramp is reserved for handicap trailer parking in the southeast corner of the lot. Please ensure a valid handicap placard or license plates are displayed when using this space.

Violations of these regulations may result in a parking citation, vehicle impoundment, or both.

These updates help ensure fair access to limited riverfront parking, especially during high-traffic periods when trailers and long-term guest vehicles have historically restricted availability.



Free family ‘People’s Park’ event at Effigy Mounds on July 6

“The People’s Park” is a community-sourced event celebrating natural ecosystems, the honest history of Iowa and the community Effigy Mounds National Monument brings together. It will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, July 6.

“People’s Park” is a title crafted to convey the sentiment that public lands belong to the people, the public, free of the interference of those who seek to exploit the land for resources.

Effigy Mounds National Monument is located at 151 Highway 76, Harpers Ferry, three miles north of Marquette.

In addition to the park’s usual amenities, there will be live music by Mike McAbee, kid and family-friendly activities such as face painting, block printing (bring a blank clothing item to have printed), button making, educational materials, sign-making and more.

The July 6 event was created by local citizens who care about Effigy Mounds (it is not a National Park Service event). Several Iowa community-based organizations, including Artivists of Iowa, Northeast Iowa Indivisible and Iowa Indivisible, are also involved in making this event a success.

These activities will be held in addition to the grassroots demonstrations that have been held at Effigy Mounds every Sunday morning since mid-February, when the first layoffs of federal employees began. The purpose of the peaceful demonstrations is to show support for public lands and employees.

Carpooling is encouraged. There is public parking under the bridge in Marquette and at the intersection of Highways 76 and X52.

Organizers encourage everyone to also take time that day to explore the beautiful natural and historic sites in and around Effigy Mounds.

NORTH IOWA

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(Swede Ridge on Great River Road past Pikes Peak)

BBQ Sandwiches, Hot Dogs, Potato Salad, Baked Beans, Bars or Pie, Ice Cream Cups, Bottle of Water, Coffee, or Lemonade \$12.00

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