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DISTRACTED DRIVING IS DEADLY DRIVING: EXTRA ENFORCEMENT STARTS APRIL 1ST to save lives

Drive Smart: Extra Distracted Driving Enforcement on Minnesota Roads April 1-30

Owatonna, Minn., April 1, 2025 – Distracted driving continues to be a threat on Minnesota roads. Whether it's the latest social media app, a phone call or even eating food while on the road, extra tasks take drivers attention away from driving. That's why Minnesota law enforcement agencies and traffic safety partners across the state will be participating in a month-long distracted driving extra enforcement and awareness campaign starting April 1.

The Owatonna Police Department will take part in extra enforcement that runs through April 30 and is coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).

"No one in a car crash regrets missing a text or not watching that video on their phone, drivers will regret a ticket or worse a crash if they aren't paying attention," said Sergeant Jason Petterson.

One of the most persistent driving myths is thinking we can multitask behind the wheel. Distractions of any kind are potentially deadly. There's visual distraction like looking away from the road. There's physical distraction like taking your hands off the wheel to do something else. There's cognitive distraction like being lost in thought. And there's the combination of all of these like texting while driving.

Driving smart and focusing all your attention on the road can help avoid tragedy for everyone sharing the road. In 2024 distracted driving was a factor in at least 29 fatal crashes in Minnesota and an estimated 137 serious injuries.

Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving

- Between 2019 and 2024, there were 115,643 citations involving distracted driving in Minnesota.

Distracted driving	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Fatalities	34	32	27	22	33	29*
Serious injuries	153	161	154	126	136	137*

Hands-Free is the Law

The hands-free cell phone use law means drivers can't hold their phone in their hand. Accessing or posting on social media, streaming videos, checking that box score or Googling information on a device while driving are against the law in Minnesota, even in hands-free mode.

Distracted Driving Consequences

- Hands-free cell phone law: The law allows a driver to use their cell phone to make calls, text, listen to music or podcasts and get directions, but only by voice commands or single-touch activation without holding the phone. Remember, hands-free is not necessarily distraction-free.
 - \$100 or more including court fees for a first offense.
 - \$300 or more including court fees for a second and/or subsequent offense.
- If you injure or kill someone while violating the hands-free law, you can face a felony charge of criminal vehicular operation or homicide.

Drive Smart and Join Minnesotans Driving Distracted-Free

- **Cell phones:** Park the phone by putting it down, activating the "Do Not Disturb" feature, silencing notifications, turning it off, placing it out of reach or going hands-free.
- **Music and other controls:** Pre-program radio stations and arrange music in an easy-to-access spot. Adjust mirrors and ventilation before traveling.
- **Navigation:** Map out the destination and enter the GPS route in advance.
- **Eating and drinking:** Avoid messy foods and secure drinks.
- **Children:** Teach children the importance of good behavior in a vehicle and model proper driving behavior.
- **Passengers:** Speak up to stop drivers from distracted driving behavior and offer to help with anything that takes the driver's attention off the road.

Visit HandsFreeMN.org and DriveSmartMN.org for more information.

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