**2024 APRIL DISTRACTED DRIVING CAMPAIGN: PRE-ENFORCEMENT NEWS RELEASE**

**PARTNER WITH SURROUNDING AREA AGENCIES OR SAFE COMMUNITY COALITIONS ON NEWS RELEASES TO AVOID DUPLICATION WHEN ISSUING TO MEDIA**

**EMBARGOED until Thursday, March 28**

CONTACT:

PHONE:

# TOO MANY DRIVERS DISTRACTED BY OLD HABITS, SEND A DANGEROUS MESSAGE

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

[INSERT YOUR CITY/COUNTY NAME], Minn. — Distracted driving takes away hopes, dreams and lives across Minnesota and can leave people with serious injuries that tragically affect their day-to-day living.

With distracted driving still claiming lives and causing life-changing injuries in our state, we all need a reminder about the dangers of not paying attention behind the wheel. 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.

[INSERT YOUR AGENCY NAME] 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 intends to seriously injure or kill someone by driving distracted. But good intentions don’t prevent crashes — smart choices do,” said [INSERT YOUR SPOKESPERSON NAME].

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 of your attention on the road can help avoid tragedy for everyone sharing the road. Distracted driving contributes to an average of 29 deaths and 146 serious, life-changing injuries a year on the road (2019-2023).

**Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving**

* Almost 30,000 crashes were distracted driving-related from 2019-2023 (preliminary), contributing to one in 11 crashes in Minnesota.
* In 2023, distracted driving contributed to 136 serious injuries and 33 deaths (preliminary).
* Distracted driving contributes to 9 percent of crashes in Minnesota.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Distracted Driving** | **2019** | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** | **Total** |
| **Fatalities** | 34 | 32 | 27 | 22 | 33 | 148 |
| **Serious Injuries** | 153 | 161 | 154 | 126 | 136 | 730 |

**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](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..L4iqg19LvBhGyjd76_SseR4ols1WQMxUpDxHw4p_Uy4/s/638866450/br/157207024462-l) and [DriveSmartMN.org](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..RcJQO15ATrQMAOyCM7HlH5wnlQGLtXyAZfcm_-llPp4/s/638866450/br/157207024462-l) for more information.

###