

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **2019 APRIL DISTRACTED DRIVING CAMPAIGN: PRE-ENFORCEMENT NEWS RELEASE**

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### **PREVENT HOPES AND DREAMS FROM DYING: SPEAK UP ABOUT DISTRACTED DRIVING**

*Extra Enforcement on Minnesota Roads April 8 – 30*

Distracted driving-related crashes claim an average of 53 lives each year, causing a lifetime of grief and pain for the families left behind and an untold story of what could have been.

In an effort to increase awareness and change dangerous behaviors, Minnesota law enforcement agencies will begin a three-week extra distracted driving enforcement wave starting April 8. The Steele County Sheriff's Office, along with the Owatonna Police Department, will take part in extra enforcement along with more than 300 law enforcement agencies across Minnesota. The distracted driving campaign that runs through April 30 is coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (DPS-OTS).

"Take a moment and describe your loved one out loud," said Sergeant Jason Petterson of the Owatonna Police Department. "Think about all of their loves, passions and accomplishments. Now think about saying those same things at your loved one's funeral. That is what can happen when a driver decides to take their eyes off the road, even for a split second. Let's protect the hopes and dreams of everyone around us by putting the distractions away and focusing 100 percent of our attention on the road."

#### **Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving**

- Continuing a 6-year trend texting citations climbed 30 percent from 2017 to 2018.
- Distracted driving contributes to one in five crashes in Minnesota.

*Owatonna Police Department - Exceeding Expectations!*

- Distracted driving contributes to an average of 53 deaths and 216 serious injuries a year (2013 – 2017).

<b>Distracted Driving</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Texting Citations</b>	2,177	3,498	4,115	5,988	7,357	9,545
<b>Fatalities</b>	68	59	72	41	24	*27
<b>Serious Injuries</b>	241	196	173	254	218	*178

\*Preliminary Data

### **Campaign History (2015 – 2018) – A Disturbing Trend**

- During the 2018 distracted driving extra enforcement campaign, law enforcement cited 1,576 people for texting and driving.
- During the 2017 distracted driving extra enforcement campaign, law enforcement cited 1,017 people for texting and driving.
- During the 2016 distracted driving extra enforcement campaign, law enforcement cited 972 people for texting and driving.
- During the 2015 distracted driving extra enforcement campaign, law enforcement cited 909 people for texting and driving.

### **Distracted Driving Behaviors**

Posting on Facebook, checking that box score or Googling information on a device while driving are all against the law under Minnesota’s “Use of Wireless Communications Device” statute, which is commonly referred to as the [texting and driving law](#).

Distractions that could lead to a crash also include fiddling with controls for music, eating and drinking, children fighting or an adult passenger’s behavior.

### **Distracted Driving Consequences**

- With Minnesota’s “No Texting” law, it’s illegal for drivers to read, send texts and emails, and access the web while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. That includes sitting at a stoplight or stop sign. Penalties for this violation can include:
  - \$50 plus court fees for a first offense.
  - \$275 plus court fees for a second and/or subsequent offense.
- If you injure or kill someone because of texting and driving, you can face a felony charge of criminal vehicular operation or homicide.

### **Speak Up and Join Minnesotans Driving Distracted-Free**

- Cell phones — Put the phone down, turn it off or place it out of reach.

- 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.

Distracted driving education is a component of Minnesota's core traffic safety effort, [Toward Zero Deaths \(TZD\)](#). A primary vision of the TZD program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma response.

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