April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month—

A truck driver was allegedly looking down at his cell phone for eight seconds before he slammed into a car, killing a father of three. More than two football fields—that’s how long investigators believed the driver traveled in those eight seconds. Eight seconds—that’s all it took to change the lives of a family who will no longer see their loved one, and a truck driver who potentially faces serious jail time for a choice to look away from the road. This is just the latest distracted driving fatality in Minnesota. When it comes to distracted driving, enough is enough. Starting April 9th, the Owatonna Police Department will take part in extra enforcement along with 300 law enforcement agencies across Minnesota. Our distracted driving campaign that runs through April 22nd is in support of the MN Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety Toward Aero Deaths (TZD) Campaign.

Distracted Driving is Dangerous Driving—texting citations climbed nearly 23% from 2016 to 2017; distracted driving contributes to one in five crashes in Minnesota; and, distracted driving contributes to an average of 59 deaths and 233 serious injuries a year (2102-2016).

If at First You Don’t Succeed, or the Second Time—

On March 31st at approximately 10:00 PM near the intersection of Grove Ave. and Main St., an officer stopped a vehicle for an equipment violation. The driver ended up having a revoked driver’s license and could not provide proof of valid insurance—he was cited with those offenses and released at the scene. The vehicle was legally parked and left alongside the roadway—the driver was advised to find a valid driver to move the vehicle. Approximately 30 minutes later, the same officer observed the same vehicle with the same equipment violation in the 1500 block of St. Paul Rd. A second traffic stop was conducted and the same driver was found to be operating the vehicle is in motion or part of traffic—this includes sitting at a stoplight or stop sign.

No Fooling—

On April Fools’ Day, an officer noticed a pickup truck with a large banner on it was pulling a trailer. Upon further investigation, the driver was found to have a suspended license and a revoked driver license. He was cited for a gross misdemeanor for driving while prohibited from driving and will be released to a driver education program and the OMW officer. The stop occurred at 10:37 a.m. and the truck was traveling at 10 miles per hour.

Severe Weather Awareness—

Are you ready for severe weather? Severe Weather Awareness Week takes place April 9-13th. The week is designed to refresh, remind and educate everyone about the season’s threats from severe weather and how to avoid them. It’s also a great time to make and practice your emergency plan and build or refresh your emergency preparedness kit. For more information and what to expect this week, click here.

For the Fallen—

Lanny Louks, age 42 of Owatonna, was arrested and jailed. Later, Louks provided a breath sample which revealed a breath alcohol content of .20 or 2 ½ times the legal limit to drive. Louks has been charged with two counts of 3rd Degree DWI-related offenses.