

Hands-Free Talking Points

Key Messages

1) Public Awareness Campaign Details

- The Minnesota Department of Public Safety is creating and implementing a public awareness campaign with the goals of educating all Minnesotans about the new law and to, over time, help contribute to a reduction in citations and crashes involving drivers on their mobile phones.
- As a state agency with the responsibility for traffic safety on Minnesota roads, DPS will lead the campaign in collaboration with other state agencies, traffic safety partners and law enforcement agencies concerned about the safety of all Minnesotans.
- DPS is talking about the new law now and will continue to provide information in the weeks leading up to the law's enactment on Aug. 1.
- The campaign will include:
 - Earned, paid and social media, web-based resources, audio/video components, collateral and communications support for our traffic safety partners across Minnesota.
 - \$700,000 is targeted for paid media and new creative across multiple platforms with information specific to the new law.

2) What Should Drivers Know?

- For any driver used to being on the phone, the time to ***start adapting to this new law*** is now, well before it takes effect.
- We want Minnesotans to stay safe, stay alive and stay out of trouble under the new law.
- There is no official grace period for drivers. Enforcement protocol is an individual law enforcement agency decision based on their department policy. Minnesotans need to know that the law is the law starting Aug. 1, and drivers should never assume they'll get a free pass at any time.
- The first ticket is \$50 plus court fees and the second and later tickets are \$275 plus court fees.

3) What's the Law?

- The new 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.
- You may not hold your phone in your hand.
- A driver may not use their phone at any time for video calling, video live-streaming, Snapchat, gaming, looking at video or photos stored on the phone, using apps, reading texts and scrolling or typing on the phone.
- Hand-held phone use is allowed to obtain emergency assistance, if there is an immediate threat to life and safety, or when in an authorized emergency vehicle while performing official duties.

Distracted Driving — Disturbing Data

- More than 60,000 crashes were distracted driving-related from 2014 – 2018 (preliminary), contributing to nearly one in five crashes in Minnesota.
- Distracted driving contributes to an average of 45 deaths and 204 life-changing injuries a year (2014 – 2018 preliminary).
- **Texting citations** climbed 30 percent from 2017 to 2018.
- Numbers from Minnesota Courts show a disturbing trend in **texting citations**:
 - 2,177 citations for violating Minnesota's texting-while-driving law in 2013.
 - 3,498 in 2014
 - 4,115 in 2015
 - 5,988 in 2016
 - 7,357 in 2017
 - 9,545 in 2018

Background

It's a myth to think we can multitask behind the wheel.

- Using a cell phone while driving, whether hands-free or hand-held, delays a driver's reactions as much as having an alcohol-concentration level of .08 percent. (University of Utah)
- At 55 mph, texting and driving is like traveling the length of a football field blindfolded. (NHTSA)
- No one intends to seriously injure or kill someone by driving distracted. But good intentions don't prevent crashes — smart choices do.
- If you injure or kill someone because of texting and driving, you can face a felony charge of criminal vehicular operation or homicide.
- Before heading out, do what you can to eliminate distractions — set your music, put your phone out of reach, figure out your directions, secure your drinks and avoid messy foods, and if people are riding with
- Distracted driving crashes are likely under-reported due to law enforcement's challenge in determining distraction as a crash factor.
- Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. (NHTSA)
- Text messaging increased the risk of a crash or near-crash by two times. (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute)
- Millennials nationwide are the biggest offenders when it comes to texting and driving, with more 16- to 24-year-olds handling phones while driving than any other age group. (NHTSA)
- Nationwide, 9 percent of drivers 15 to 19 years old who were involved in fatal crashes were reported as being distracted at the time of the crash in 2016. This age group has the largest percentage of drivers who were distracted at the time of a fatal crash. (NHTSA)
- Nationwide, handheld cellphone use while driving is highest among 15- to 29-year-old drivers, but female drivers are most at-risk for being involved in a fatal crash involving a distracted driver. (NHTSA)

- Nationwide, female drivers with a cell phone have been more likely to be involved in fatal distracted-driving crashes as compared to male drivers every year since 2012. (NHTSA)

Types of Distraction

- Visual — looking away from the road.
- Mechanical/Physical — taking hands off the wheel: manipulation of controls, such as dialing a cell phone or adjusting radio or music device.
- Cognitive — being “lost in thought,” or focusing on a conversation, resulting in withdrawing from situational awareness.
- Combination of the above — reading a map or texting while driving.

Make the Right Choice

- 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.

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