



DISTRACTED DRIVING FACT SHEET

WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

- ✚ Distracted driving is any non driving activity that takes your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel or interrupts your concentration while driving that increases the risk of crashing.
- ✚ Distractions can be visual, manual or cognitive. The use of cell phones and other electronic devices while driving poses a significant risk to all who use our roadways.

HOW SERIOUS IS THE PROBLEM?

- ✚ Nationwide, nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving a distracted driver while more than half a million were injured. Over 1300 people are injured every day on our nation's highways as a result of a distracted driving crash. (NHTSA)
- ✚ Drivers who use hand held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- ✚ Driving while using a cell phone reduces brain activity associated with driving by 37 per cent (Carnegie-Mellon)

WHAT IS NHTSA DOING TO COMBAT THE PROBLEM?

- ✚ NHTSA continues to monitor research, collect data, promote legislation, and encourage public awareness and education. NHTSA is also conducting high visibility enforcement projects in two States- Connecticut and New York. Both States have excellent laws, strong commitment, and effective traffic enforcement programs. These projects will apply proven high visibility enforcement and public awareness strategies used to increase safety belt use and reduce impaired driving in recent years.

WHAT WILL THE CAMPAIGN LOOK LIKE?

- ✚ The campaign will consist of focused collaborative enforcement among State and local police agencies in the Hartford metro area during concentrated enforcement periods combined with paid media over the course of one year. The campaign will track changes in observed cell phone use and driver attitudes, awareness, and self reported behavior.
- ✚ Beginning April 10, law enforcement will be out in full force making sure drivers keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel as part of the metro area's first distracted driving crackdown. Anyone caught texting or talking on a cell phone in violation of State law will be ticketed. Law enforcement will take a zero tolerance approach. The campaign theme will be *"Phone In One Hand, Ticket in the Other"*

WHAT IS THE DISTRACTED DRIVING LAW IN CONNECTICUT?

- ✚ No person shall operate a motor vehicle on any highway while using a hand held mobile telephone to engage in a call or while using a mobile electronic device while such vehicle is in motion.
- ✚ No person under eighteen (18) years of age shall use a hand held mobile telephone (including one with a hands free accessory) or a mobile electronic device while operating a moving motor vehicle on a highway
- ✚ No person shall engage in any activity not related to the actual operation of a motor vehicle that interferes with its safe operation on a highway.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE DISTRACTED DRIVING PROBLEM IN CONNECTICUT?

- ✚ According to NHTSA 20 per cent of all crashes that occurred nationwide in 2008 involved some type of distraction. This information is not available on a State by State basis. Beginning in January, 2010 law enforcement agencies in CT were requested to include distracted driving as a contributing factor in the narrative of the State crash report.
- ✚ Since October, 2005 almost 117,000 cell phone and distracted driving citations have been issued in CT by State and local police (Source: CT CIB)
- ✚ In addition to the human cost, fatal crashes alone resulted in over \$300 million in injury related costs to the State (lost work, health care costs, long term care etc) (Source: NHTSA)

WHAT CAN THE PUBLIC DO TO REDUCE DISTRACTED DRIVING AND SUPPORT THIS CAMPAIGN?

- ✚ Strengthen the efforts to eliminate distracted driving by adding your voice and experience to the Community. Find out what the distracted driving law is in your State. If your State does not have a cell phone or texting ban, or has limited or a weak distracted driving law, become a champion for legislation. Call or write your State legislators and let them know you support distracted driving laws.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO KEEP THEIR TEENS SAFE FROM THE RISKS OF DRIVING DISTRACTED?

- ✚ Studies show that parents have a great influence on teen behavior. While you may not think you have great influence, that's it's all about peer pressure, you're still the greatest influence on your teen. Talk to your teen and set rules to keep your teens from driving while distracted. Know the facts and share it with them. Engage your teens in a dialogue about the problem.
- ✚ Know the law. Many Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) laws have cell phone and texting bans for your drivers. Make sure you and your teen driver know the law and that your teen driver adheres to the rules. In addition to the consequences that you have set at home, if your teen violates the GDL law they could have their license delayed or suspended.

WHERE CAN THE PUBLIC GET MORE INFORMATION ON DISTRACTED DRIVING?

- ✚ The US Department of Transportation maintains a web site called www.distraction.gov to provide citizens with valuable information on the issue. The site provides information on how to get involved, State laws, facts and statistics, ongoing research, media materials, and internal activities within DOT to reduce distracted driving.