



Distracted Driving Key Talking Points:

What Is Distracted Driving?

Distracted driving can take many forms. It applies to any action that takes your eyes off the road for more than two seconds, takes your hands off the steering wheel, or interrupts your concentration while driving.

The use of cell phones or other electronic devices while driving is a significant and growing concern, particularly since it has increased exponentially in recent years. Recent research indicates that texting while driving represents an even greater risk than talking on cell phone.

How Serious Is the Distracted Driving Problem?

Driver distraction presents a serious and potentially deadly danger to all drivers on our nation's roadways. In 2008, nearly 6000 people (16 per cent of all fatalities) lost their lives in crashes where at least one form of driver distraction was noted on the police crash report. More than half a million people were injured in distracted driving related crashes in 2008 .

About 6 per cent of observed drivers are using hand held cell phones. This translates to 812,000 vehicles being driven by someone using a cell phone at any given daylight moment. If drivers using hands free phones are counted, one out of every ten vehicles is being driven by someone using a phone on our nation's roadways.

NHTSA estimates that driver distraction from all sources contributes to 25 percent of all police-reported traffic crashes.

What Is NHTSA Doing To Combat This Problem?

NHTSA continues to monitor research, collect data, promote legislation, and encourage innovative strategies among the States. NHTSA is also conducting distracted driving demonstration projects in New York and Connecticut. The demonstration projects will apply high visibility enforcement techniques to the distracted driving problem for the first time and evaluate the results after a one year period. These techniques have been highly successful in increasing safety belt use and reducing impaired driving nationwide in the past decade.

Why Were Connecticut and New York Selected?

Both States have model cell phone and texting laws, strong commitment to the problem and long standing effective traffic enforcement programs. The campaign will be conducted in the Hartford metropolitan area and results will be compared against communities implementing regular enforcement patrols.

What will the Campaign Look Like?

The first phase of the campaign will target cell phone users and texting drivers with a strong enforcement message (*Phone In One Hand, Ticket In The Other*) using a combination of paid media and focused enforcement at specific times and locations over a two week period. Subsequent phases will repeat the enforcement for up to one year. Law enforcement agencies in collaboration with State and community partners will also be engaged in ongoing public awareness and community outreach to change public attitudes and behavior.

How Will The Campaign Be Evaluated?

Observation surveys of driver cell phone use behavior will be conducted before and after each high visibility enforcement period along with attitude, awareness, and self reported surveys conducted at State DMV offices.

What Will Law Enforcement Agencies Be Doing To Promote Officer Compliance with the Cell Phone Law?

Besides strong enforcement of the State's distracted driving law, law enforcement agencies will be training officers, developing policies, and encouraging officers to become role models for the public by not using cell phones or texting

How Will the Campaign Be Paid For?

CT has received a \$200,000 distracted driving demonstration grant from NHTSA to cover dedicated patrol costs associated with this campaign. NHTSA is providing paid media and evaluation resources to complement the grant. The State Police and local departments will also be emphasizing cell phone and texting violations during regular patrols.

How Much Revenue Do You Estimate This Campaign Will Generate For The Cities Involved?

As with all traffic laws, citation revenues revert to the State Treasury with a small percentage going back to cities and towns. The main focus of this demonstration project is to dramatically reduce cell phone use and texting before such behavior becomes even more of a threat to safe driving on the State's roadways

What Can the Public Do To Reduce Distracted Driving and Support This Campaign?

Set a good example for family and friends. Never talk or text on your cell phone while driving. If you are a passenger in a car and the driver is talking or texting, ask them to pull over and stop the car or wait until they get to their destination. Before you drive turn off your phone and put it out of reach. Drive defensively. Even though you won't drive distracted there are others who do

What Can Parents Do to Keep Their Teens Safe From The Risks of Driving Distracted?

Set rules to keep your teens from driving while distracted. Tell them that you will check the cell phone log on the bill, and that there will be serious consequences if they break the rules. Then follow through if they do break the rules. Set a good example. Turn your phone off before you get behind the wheel, and put it out of reach until you reach your destination and can use it safely.