



ROCKFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING
420 West State Street
Rockford, Illinois 61101-1288
815-966-2900

POLICE DEPARTMENT
CHET EPPERSON
CHIEF OF POLICE

TRAFFIC RELEASE

DATE & TIME **04/04/14 12:02 PM**

Bureau: **Field Services Bureau**

Authorized Supervisor: **Lieutenant Patrick Hoey**

Phone: **815-987-5744**

Incident: **April is Distracted Driving Month**

MESSAGE

U Drive. U Text. U Pay. National Texting Enforcement Campaign

To kick-off April 2014 National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the U.S. Department of Transportation is launching its first-ever national advertising campaign and law enforcement crackdown to combat distracted driving - U Drive. U Text. U Pay. According to DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 3,328 people were killed and an estimated 421,000 were injured in distraction-affected crashes in 2012.

Currently, 43 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands ban text messaging for drivers of all ages; 12 states, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands prohibit drivers of all ages from using hand-held cell phones while driving and 37 states and D.C. ban all cell phone use by novice drivers.

WHAT IS DISTRACTED DRIVING?

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. *All* distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include:

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- Texting
- Using a cell phone or smartphone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigation system
- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

But, because text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention from the driver, it is by far the most alarming distraction.

The best way to end distracted driving is to educate all Americans about the danger it poses.

Is distracted driving really a problem?

Distracted driving kills. The friends, family, and neighbors of the thousands of people killed each year in distracted driving crashes will tell you it is a very serious safety problem. The nearly half a million people injured each year will agree.

- **What is distracted driving?**

Distraction occurs any time you take your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off your primary task: driving safely. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.

- **If it's so dangerous, why do people do it?**

Some people still don't know how dangerous distracted driving is. Others know about the risks of texting and talking while driving, but still choose to do so anyway. They make the mistake of thinking the

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statistics don't apply to them, that they can defy the odds. Still others simply lead busy, stressful lives and use cell phones and smartphones to stay connected with their families, friends, and workplaces. They forget or choose not to shut these devices off when they get behind the wheel.

- **Who are the most serious offenders?**

Our youngest and most inexperienced drivers are most at risk, with 16% of all distracted driving crashes involving drivers under 20. But they are not alone. At any given moment during daylight hours, over 660,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using a hand-held cell phone.

- **Sending or reading one text is pretty quick, unlike a phone conversation - wouldn't that be okay?**

Texting is the most alarming distraction because it involves manual, visual, and cognitive distraction simultaneously. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded. It's extraordinarily dangerous.

- **Is it safe to use a hands-free device to talk on a cell phone while driving?**

So far, the research indicates that the cognitive distraction of having a hands-free phone conversation causes drivers to miss the important visual and audio cues that would ordinarily help you avoid a crash.

- **Take the pledge** to drive phone-free and turn your cell phone off when you turn your ignition on. And if you're a passenger, make sure your driver does the same.

Information taken from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

During the month of April the Rockford Police Department will be doing roving 24 hour, 7 days a week Distracted Driving Enforcement. Special attention will be given to school zones and busy roadways.

Please take the pledge to drive phone-free!

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