



**** MEDIA RELEASE ****

**BIG LAKE POLICE
DEPARTMENT**



790 Minnesota Avenue, Big Lake MN, 55309

Incident Number: N/A

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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: SAVE LIVES BY ENDING DISTRACTED DRIVING TODAY

Extra Enforcement on Minnesota Roads April 11 – 17

News headlines about people losing their lives to distracted driving are becoming all too common in Minnesota:

- A New Prague school bus driver walking to get his morning paper was killed by a woman allegedly responding to a text.
- A driver sending Facebook messages ran a red light, killing a father and his young daughter here in Sherburne County.
- A 20-year-old suspected of being distracted lost control of his vehicle in Washington County, hit an embankment, went airborne and smashed into a car, killing a 22-year-old mother.

It is stories such as these that recently had Matt Langer, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol, saying distracted driving feels like “a never-ending nightmare.”

Starting April 11, all law enforcement agencies in Sherburne County will conduct overtime patrols on Minnesota roads in an effort to reduce distracted driving. More than 300 law enforcement agencies across the state will participate in the extra enforcement distracted driving campaign that runs through April 17 and is coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (DPS-OTS).

“We can no longer remain silent when a driver is distracted by their phone or takes their eyes off the road to change their music, talk to their friends in the backseat or answer that text,” said Lt. Sam Olson. “Enough is enough. Let’s all speak up and do our part by ending distracted driving before it’s too late for you or someone you love.”

Too Many Lives Lost

Too many people are not making driving the number one priority when behind the wheel.

- In a five year period (2010 – 2014), 328 people lost their lives and 1,138 people suffered life-changing injuries in distracted driving-related crashes.
- Driver inattention or distraction was the number one contributing factor in multiple vehicle crashes in 2014.
- More than 86,000 crashes were distracted driving-related from 2010 – 2014, contributing to one in four crashes.
- During the 2015 distracted driving extra enforcement campaign, law enforcement cited 909 drivers for texting and driving, an 80 percent increase over the previous year.

Distracted Driving Behaviors

Posting on Facebook, checking that box score or Googling information on a device while driving are all against the law under Minnesota's "Use of Wireless Communications Device" statute, which is commonly referred to as the texting and driving law. Distractions that could lead to a crash can also include but are not limited to music, eating and drinking, children fighting or an adult passenger's behavior.

Do Your Part

- 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.

Enhanced Law Targets Repeat Offenders

In Minnesota, it is illegal for drivers to read, compose or send texts and emails, and access the web while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. That includes sitting at a stoplight or stop sign. It is also illegal for drivers with a permit or provisional driver's license to use a cell phone while driving, except for emergencies to call 911. Under Minnesota's enhanced law, drivers face a \$275 fine, plus court fees, for second and subsequent violations of the texting while driving law. If you injure or kill someone because of texting and driving, you can face a felony charge of criminal vehicular operation or homicide.