

Mattapoissett Police Department reminds locals that April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Despite the fact that it defies common sense and logic people continue to text, scroll social media, take selfies and do their hair in the mirrors while driving. It not only places oneself at risk of injury or even death, but it also places everyone – pedestrians and commuters alike – at risk.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), driving a vehicle while texting is six times more dangerous than intoxicated driving. It borders on addiction – not being able to stop a bad habit and always looking to use. Is it time to start charging people with DUI for using their phones while driving?

“April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month. AAA recently produced a PSA as a reminder that distracted driving continues as a significant problem. Please feel free to share this PSA on your social media channels and/or website AAA’s new television public service announcement. It’s a good time to remind driver of the hand-held phone ban and texting laws as traffic begins to pick up with increased vaccinations, decreased pandemic restrictions, and warm weather coming.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2019 distracted driving crashes killed 3,142 people in the U.S., an average of 9 deaths per day. That number was up 10 percent from the year before (2,839 deaths in 2018). In southern New England (RI/MA/CT), 35 people

died in 2019 as a result of distracted driving.

Distracted driving remains a growing traffic safety problem according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's 2019 Traffic Safety Culture Index. The survey found most drivers (96 percent) believe typing or reading on a hand-held cellphone while driving to be very or extremely dangerous, but 39 percent admit to reading and 29 percent admit to typing on a smartphone at least once while behind the wheel within the last month.

Even though using a hand-held device is illegal while driving and while stopped at a red light or stop sign in many states, the survey suggests some drivers do so anyway and aren't aware of the "hangover effect," which comes from interacting with technology while on the road. In a study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, researchers found drivers can experience a "hangover effect" where the mind stays distracted for up to 27 seconds after using smartphones or voice-to-text vehicle infotainment systems to send text messages, make phone calls or update social media.

Please join AAA in encouraging all motorists to eliminate distracted driving by following these tips:

- Put it away. Place your mobile device out of sight to prevent temptation. Know where you're going. If using a navigation system, program the destination before driving.
- Pull over. If you must call or text while on the road, pull off the road safely and stop first.
- Ask passengers for help. If riding with someone, seek their help to navigate, make a call or send a message.
- Be a good passenger. Speak out if the driver of your vehicle is distracted.
- Don't be a distraction. Avoid calling or texting others when you know they are driving.
- Activate Do Not Disturb. Setting up this feature on iPhone or Android device will prevent calls from coming in while

you're driving.

Everyone should prevent being intoxicated. Just as drivers need to pay attention, so do pedestrians and bicyclists. Never call, text or play games while walking or cycling."