



NEWS RELEASE

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DON'T TEXT AND DRIVE, IT'S THE LAW

~ Florida's ban on texting is effective today~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Texting and driving is no longer legal in Florida. Florida becomes the 41st state to ban texting while driving. The new law took effect at midnight. Distracted drivers are becoming one of the greatest threats on our roads today. More than 3,400 crashes occurred last year in Florida in which the driver was distracted by an “electronic device,” such as a cell phone, which resulted in 24 fatalities. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration estimates that a driver who texts and drives is 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash. The problem is of particular concern among teenage drivers. Eleven teens are killed each day in the U.S. as the result of a crash in which texting and driving was to blame.

How much of a distraction can texting be to a driver? Sending or receiving a text distracts a driver for an average of nearly five seconds. Traveling at a speed of 55 miles per hour, that's the equivalent of driving the length of a football field with your eyes closed.

“Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to distracted driving crashes due to their lack of experience behind the wheel,” said Julie L. Jones, Executive Director of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. “Teens have the highest crash rate of any age group with more than 22,000 teen drivers involved in crashes last year and 41 of them killed.”

“Enforcing and educating all drivers about the dangers of texting and driving is important,” said Col. David Brierton, director of the Florida Highway Patrol. “There are three things to remember to keep you safe while driving: keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes on the road and your mind on driving.”



The Florida law makes texting while driving a secondary offense meaning the driver must first have committed a primary offense such as reckless or careless driving, speeding or failing to wear a seat belt in order to be cited. The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida Highway Patrol, working with safety and law enforcement partners across the state, are using this day to make motorists aware of the new law and to educate drivers on the dangers of distracted driving.

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“The Florida Police Chiefs Association (FPCA) is pleased to see the implementation of the anti-texting while driving legislation. This type of law can only make our roads safer and save lives.” said FPCA President, Chief Philip Thorne, Springfield PD. “Educating the public, specifically our youth, on the dangers of distracted driving is crucial in our efforts to protect those traveling the roadways in our state.”

“During the 2013 legislative session the Florida Sheriffs Association fully supported anti-texting legislation and we are happy to have this new law put into effect today,” said Steve Casey, Executive Director of the Florida Sheriffs Association. “FSA has continually supported safe driving through our youth program, the Teen Driver Challenge, and will remain active in educating and promoting safe driving among all drivers.”

The Department has created Public Service Announcements (PSA) for teen drivers. For more information, visit: <http://www.flhsmv.gov/fhp/DistractedDriving/>

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol. To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered, visit www.flhsmv.gov, follow us on Instagram at FLHSMV, Twitter @[FDHSMV](https://twitter.com/FDHSMV) or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/flhsmv).

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