



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Howard County police to participate in Distracted Driving Awareness Month

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and the Howard County Police Department (HCPD) is helping spread the message that distracted driving is hazardous to everyone on the road.

Throughout the month, HCPD will join law enforcement agencies across the state in conducting distracted driving enforcement and talking with motorists about the risks of distracted driving. The department will promote the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration Highway Safety Office's "Park the Phone" campaign, a statewide effort to discourage distracted driving.

"Drivers who are distracted by their phones pose a serious danger to themselves, other motorists, and pedestrians," Police Chief Lisa Myers said. "No text, call or email is that important. Park the phone before you drive."

Drivers can be ticketed for writing, sending, or reading a text or electronic message while driving. The fine is \$70 and one point on your license and may increase to \$110 and three points if use of the device contributes to a crash. Fines for using a handheld cell phone are \$83 for the first offense, \$140 for the second offense, and \$160 for the third offense. Any driver who causes serious injury or death while using a handheld cell phone or texting may receive a prison sentence of up to 3 years and a fine of up to \$5,000.

While cell phone use is seen with drivers of all ages, texting while driving has become an especially problematic trend among younger drivers. There are enhanced penalties for teen drivers and those on a provisional license for the violations mentioned above.

According to the latest statistics from the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration, approximately 27,000 people are injured or killed annually in Maryland because of distracted driving crashes. The "Park the Phone" campaign encourages drivers to:

- Park your phone before you drive.
- Manage your time. Driving is not the time to talk or text on a cell phone.
- Have a designated texter. Ask someone else to send or read text messages for you.
- Ride responsibly. If you are a passenger and a driver is using a handheld cell phone, ask him/her to wait until arriving at a safe location.
- Buckle up! It's the single most important step to save your life in the event of a crash.

Additional information and safety tips can be found at towardzerodeathsmd.com.

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