



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES



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### **Howard County Fire and Police Departments partner for Distracted Driving Awareness Month**

In an effort to make roads safer, the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) and Howard County Police Department (HCPD) are partnering together to educate motorists about the risks of distracted driving. April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month and both departments have pledged to spread the message to drivers that distracted driving is not only hazardous to themselves, but to others as well.

“It’s important that we keep the roads safe for all in our community, and raising awareness of the dangers of distracted driving is imperative,” said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman. “Our hope is that people realize the potential risks involved and that they discontinue bad habits in order to help protect not only themselves, but also their families and others on the road.”

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.

According to the latest statistics from the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration:

- There are more than 53,000 distracted driving crashes every year, accounting for 58% of the total crashes in Maryland.
- There are 28,874 people injured every year and 232 people killed as the result of a distracted driver in Maryland.
- Distracted driving fatal crashes accounted for 46% of the all fatal crashes in Maryland.

"Combatting distracted driving should be everyone’s responsibility," said Fire Chief John S. Butler. "It’s our duty as public safety departments to make sure the community is educated about the threat it poses and how to avoid preventable injuries."

“As police officers, we see first-hand the devastating results of crashes caused by distracted driving,” added Police Chief Gary L. Gardner. “Taking your eyes off the road, even for a moment, can be dangerous or deadly for the people in your car and others on the road. We urge you not to take that chance.”

Distracted driving enforcement details will be conducted by the Howard County Police Department and other law enforcement agencies across the state for the entire month.

For additional information and safety tips, please visit [facebook.com/hcdfrs](https://facebook.com/hcdfrs) and [facebook.com/howardcountypolicedepartment](https://facebook.com/howardcountypolicedepartment).

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