**2017 ANTI-DISTRACTED DRIVING**

**ENFORCEMENT CAMPAIGN
SAMPLE OP-ED**

**Put Your Phone Away or Get Ready to Pay.**

***Law Enforcement Focused on Stopping***

***Distracted Driving with U Drive. U Text. U Pay***

By **[Local Law Enforcement Official]**

Admit it, you’ve probably seen someone texting while driving. It’s pretty easy to spot a distracted driver. You may even be guilty of distracted driving yourself. With so many people constantly tuned in to their smartphones, texting from behind the wheel is all too common, but it is also a killer on our roadways.

That’s why the **[State/Local Enforcement Organization]** is teaming up with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to reach all drivers with an important warning: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

From April 6 to April 10, 2017, law enforcement officers will be out in force looking for distracted drivers and issuing tickets to anyone caught texting while driving as part of the national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* enforcement campaign.

According to NHTSA, 3,477 people were killed, and an estimated 391,000 more were injured, in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2015. That was a 9-percent increase in fatalities as compared to the previous year.

Everyone knows that texting while driving is distracting and dangerous, but people often ignore the risks and do it anyway. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety’s analysis of 2009-2012 data found that while more than 80 percent of drivers believed it was completely unacceptable for a motorist to text behind the wheel, more than a third of those same drivers admitted to reading text messages while operating a passenger motor vehicle themselves.

Driving while distracted is more than just personally risky. When you text and drive, you become a danger to everyone on the road around you.

Many young motorists are under the impression that it is acceptable to text and drive because the majority of their peers are doing it. Nearly 1 out of 10 drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as being distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of fatal crashes.

The best way to not get busted for texting while driving is to never do it in the first place. Always put your phone away prior to driving and save the humiliation of getting pulled over.

Remind your family and friends to never text and drive:

* No one likes to be criticized by a friend for doing something wrong, but it’s even worse to get caught by law enforcement and have to pay a fine.
* Don’t follow the pack, be a leader. When you get behind the wheel, be an example to your family and friends by putting away your phone.
* Speak up: If your friends text while driving, tell them to stop. Listen to your passengers; if they catch you texting while driving and tell you to put your phone away, put it down.

You should never be embarrassed to do the right thing. It’s more embarrassing—and costly—to have a law enforcement officer stop you and call you out for your dangerous behavior. And it is an absolute nightmare to be responsible for causing injury or death to another human being.

Texting while driving is dangerous, and getting caught can be expensive. Save your money, and maybe save a life—your text message can wait. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

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