



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 12, 2011

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NEW TV SPOTS PUT TEXTING AND DRIVING IN THE BODY BAG

Statewide Distracted Driving Enforcement Effort April 21

ST. PAUL — In advance of a statewide distracted driving enforcement effort on April 21, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety today released two TV spots addressing the dangers of texting while driving — featuring fatal crash victims texting from body bags.

In Minnesota, it is illegal for drivers to read, compose or send texts/emails, and access the Web on a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic, such as at a stoplight or stuck in traffic. It is also illegal for drivers under age 18 to use a cell phone at any time.

The dark comedy spots show the dead victims texting while enclosed in body bags. An attendant in the morgue explains to the victims — a busy mom and a male teen with a crush — that texting behind the wheel caused their deadly crashes.

The spots may be viewed online here: **“Mom”** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tr14xoD1U9w>) and **“Teen”** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Kvqw0ExM7k>). TV stations are encouraged to download broadcast-quality versions of the spots to air as PSAs here:

<https://mndeptpublicsafety.sharefile.com/d/s3852b352129490a9>.

“These spots magnify that texting while driving is illegal for a reason — it is particularly dangerous and may have deadly consequences,” says Cheri Marti, DPS Office of Traffic Safety director. “Texting and driving is its own universe of risk. No matter how routine driving may seem, the driving environment changes constantly — and can change in an instant — and drivers must be focused to best react to avoid a crash.”

Driver distraction is a leading crash factor in Minnesota, accounting for around 20 percent of all crashes annually, resulting in at least 70 deaths and 350 injuries. DPS reports that these numbers are vastly underreported due to officers’ challenges of determining “distraction” as a contributing crash factor.

During the April 21 distracted driving enforcement, motorists will be stopped for behavior that would endanger the motoring public. DPS underscores driver distractions include reaching for items, fiddling with radio/music/vehicle controls, eating/drinking, dealing with rowdy passengers, grooming and more.

DPS offers these tips to minimize distractions:

- Cell phones — turn off cell phones, or place them out of reach to avoid the urge to dial/answer or read or send a text. If a passenger is present, ask them to handle calls/texts.
- Music and other controls — pre-program favorite radio stations and arrange music in an easy-to-access spot. Adjust mirrors and AC/heat before traveling, or ask a passenger to assist.
- Navigation — designate a passenger to serve as a co-pilot to help with directions. If driving alone, map out destinations in advance, and pull over to study a map or program the GPS.
- Eating and drinking — try to avoid food/beverage, at least messy foods, and have drinks secured.
- Children — teach children the importance of good behavior in a vehicle; do not underestimate how distracting it can be to tend to children while driving.
- Passengers should speak up to stop drivers from distracted driving behavior.
- If making/receiving a call to/from someone driving, ask them to call back when they are not driving.

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