**2019 U DRIVE. U TEXT. U PAY. CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

**PEAK VERSION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, E-mail Address]**

**Note: Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them for permission to use their names in this press release. Also, you must get their approval for the language of their quotations, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done should you issue the press release.**

***U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*: It’s Just That Simple**

These days, nearly everyone owns a cell phone, and they use them all day long. But among the many aspects of our job, we’re working hard to remind drivers that driving distracted—by using the cell phone, riding with other vehicle passengers, eating and drinking, or even tuning the radio—is a dangerous and, often, illegal habit.

The month of April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. **[Local Law Enforcement Office]** is teaming up with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to help spread the word about the dangers of distracted driving. From April 11 to April 15, 2019, we’ll conduct a high-visibility enforcement effort called *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* Law enforcement officers will step up enforcement efforts and issue citations for distraction violations. The campaign aims to remind drivers of the consequences of their distracted actions, and continue to spread the message about the dangers of distracted driving.

According to NHTSA, between 2012-2017, nearly 20,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. In fact, there were 3,166 people killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2017, which accounts for nearly one-tenth of all fatal crashes for that year.

While we generally think of distracted driving as texting or talking on the cell phone, it can take many other forms: Adjusting a GPS, applying makeup, chatting with other passengers, eating, or taking a sip of your coffee can all distract a driver from the essential task at hand – safe driving. The bottom line is this: If your attention is anywhere other than the road, you’re driving distracted, and you’re driving dangerous.

“We see the results of distracted driving when we arrive on the scene of crashes. Sometimes, the victims have minor injuries, and other times they’re horrific. We want to remind drivers that they have the power to end these crashes. This campaign is just as important to us as it is to the drivers and other road users affected by distracted driving. It’s our job to help keep you all safe, so help us help you. We’re determined to get distracted drivers off the road. You can do your part by keeping your hands on the wheel, eyes on the road, and mind on the task of driving,” said **[Local/State Official]**.

Over the years, millennials have become the biggest texting-while-driving offenders, using their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA, in 2017, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) crashes died when teen drivers were distracted at the times of the crashes. And female drivers are most at-risk for being involved in a fatal crash involving a distracted driver.

**Drive Safe Every Trip**

Don’t want to get ticketed for distracted driving? Don’t do it. If you need to text, then pull over and do not drive. If you’re driving, follow these safe driving tips:

* If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
* Designate your passenger as your “designated texter.” Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
* Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving. Cell phone use can be habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Put the cell phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of the vehicle until you arrive at your destination.

Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. Break the cycle. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

For more information, visit [www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov](http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov).

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