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

**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE**

**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.**

**Driving? Put Down That Phone**

**Law Enforcement Urging Distracted Drivers to Remember:**

***U Drive. U Text. U Pay.***

**[City, State]—**April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and **[State/Local Law Enforcement Organization]** will be joining forces across the country to intensify enforcement of state and local texting and distracted-driving laws, and to raise awareness about the dangers—and legal implications—of distracted driving. This annual campaign is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* high-visibility enforcement effort that runs from April 11 to April 15, 2019.

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. This means that nearly one-tenth of all fatal crashes that year were reported as distraction-affected.

Over the years, millennials have become some of the biggest texting-while-driving offenders, also using their cell phones to talk and to scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA, young drivers 16- to 24-years-old have been observed using handheld electronic devices at higher rates than older drivers since 2007. In fact, in 2017, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) driving crashes died when teen drivers were distracted at the times of the crashes. Female drivers are most at-risk for being involved in a fatal crash involving a distracted driver.

“Every day, we ticket drivers who haven’t gotten the message that using their cell phones while they drive is illegal, and puts every other road user at risk,” said **[Local/State Law Enforcement Official]**. “We all know the dangers associated with distracted driving. Whether it’s eating and drinking behind the wheel, using GPS, talking to other vehicle passengers, or using the cell phone, it’s all dangerous when you’re driving. We are determined to impress upon these drivers: Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.”

Violating **[State]’s** distracted-driving laws can be costly. **[Insert State law specifics/fines]**.

An analysis by the AAA Foundation 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.

“People know texting and driving is dangerous and illegal, but they do it anyway, and it puts others at risk,” said **[Local/State Official]**. “Beginning April 11, you will see increased law enforcement efforts, as officers will be stopping and ticketing anyone who is caught texting and driving. And we are not trying to rack up citations—we are trying to save lives. If you text and drive, you will pay.”

**Drive Safe Every Trip**

**[Local/State Law Enforcement Official]** and NHTSA urge you to put your phone down when you get behind the wheel. If you need to text, then pull over and do not drive. If you’re driving, follow these steps for a phone-free experience:

* 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 out of reach 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).

10906b-091914-v2

9903g-082113-v1a

###