**2020 *U DRIVE. U TEXT. U PAY.* CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE**

**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.**

**You Know Better**

**Law Enforcement Urging Drivers to Remember:**

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

**[City, State] —** Over the past decade, distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation’s roads. **[Local/State Officials]** are encouraging drivers to put down the phone and remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* In support of April’s National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, **[State/Local Law Enforcement Organization]** will partner with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration from April 9 to April 13, 2020, for the national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* high-visibility enforcement effort. The goal of the campaign is to step up enforcement efforts to catch distracted, texting drivers and enforce distracted-driving laws.

According to NHTSA, between 2012 and 2018, nearly 23,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. In fact, there were 2,841 people killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2018. While this represents a 12-percent decrease in distracted driving fatalities from 2017, there is clearly more work to be done. There are still thousands of preventable deaths happening on our roads every year.

Over the years, millennials have become the worst texting-while-driving offenders, using their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA, young drivers 16 to 24 years old have also been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers have since 2007. In fact, in 2018, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) driving crashes died when those teen drivers were distracted at the time of the crash.

“It is absurd how common it has become to see people driving down the road looking at their phones,” **said [Local/State Official].** “People know texting and driving is dangerous and often illegal, but they selfishly do it anyway, and it puts others at risk. Beginning April 9, you will see increased law enforcement efforts, as officers will be stopping and ticketing anyone who is caught texting and driving. If you text and drive, you will pay.”

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

Many drivers are guilty of a “double standard” when it comes to distracted driving. In its 2018 Traffic Safety Culture Index, the AAA Foundation reported that while nearly 96 percent of drivers believed it was very or extremely dangerous to read a text or email while driving, 4 out of 10 drivers admitted to doing so within the previous 30 days.

“We all have cell phones, and we use them all the time,” said **[Local/State Official]**. “But when you get behind the wheel, putting away your phone should be just as automatic as putting on your seat belt. No one is good at driving distracted. If your attention is anywhere other than on the road, you’re a dangerous driver. You want other drivers to pay attention to the road, right? You should pay attention, too.”

**Drive Safe Every Trip**

**[Local/State 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 while doing so. If you’re driving, follow these steps for a safe driving 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 is habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone’s “Do Not Disturb” feature, or put your phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your 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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