



Title: **April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**
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April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

Illinois roadways have become dangerous, even deadly for an increasing number of police officers this year. The Illinois Insurance Association, a property casualty trade association, urges motorists to protect emergency responders and others by following traffic laws and committing to driving with focus. Driving distractions contribute to thousands of accidents each year. The result is often costly property damage, personal injury, even death.

The month of April is deemed National Distracted Driving Awareness Month to bring attention to the issue of distracted driving. There were 12,541 distracted driving-related motor vehicle crashes in Illinois in 2015 according to Illinois Department of Transportation statistics. These crashes injured 5,044 people and killed 21 individuals. Kevin Martin, Executive Director of the Illinois Insurance Association, encouraged motorists to take a stand against this pervasive issue.

Martin said, "Distracted driving causes problems for motorists as well as first responders, tow truck operators and construction workers. The Illinois Insurance Association and its member companies encourage drivers to avoid

distractions and remain fully engaged behind the wheel."

There are three broad categories of distractions that affect driving concentration. A visual distraction causes the motorist to take eyes off the road. A manual distraction results in the driver taking hands off the steering wheel. A cognitive distraction takes the motorist's thoughts off driving. Driving distractions often involve all three areas.

Cell phones are an obvious driving distraction, but motorists face countless others every time they get in the car. Some distractions come from within the vehicle. These are activities like fine tuning temperature and audio controls, reading panel displays or navigational devices, snacking, talking to passengers, tending to children or pets, adjusting electronic devices, grooming and countless more. Other distractions are external disruptions that come from road signs, billboard displays, construction work, scenery and fellow travelers. Daydreaming and drowsiness also cause drivers to lose focus.

It is impossible to eliminate driving distractions altogether, but there are ways to reduce the risk. Martin encouraged motorists to consider the following ideas.

- Make a conscious and deliberate decision to focus only on driving each

time you get behind the steering wheel.

- Address potential distractions before putting the car in gear. Adjust seat position, climate control, audio system and mirror to your liking. Program the GPS. Organize money for tolls, food, drinks, music and other items that might be accessed during the trip. Check for loose gear that might roll inside the vehicle. Properly stow these items.

- Hands free does not mean distraction free. Place your cell phone on silent, turn it off or consider installing an app that holds calls and texts while in route. Never text while driving.

The Illinois Insurance Association's Executive Director concluded, "National Driving Distraction Awareness Month serves as a reminder that we all must do our part to make Illinois' highways safe. Drivers that are distracted put everyone at risk. Instead, commit to being fully alert and ready to react when unexpected situations arise."

The Illinois Insurance Association is the largest state trade association representing property and casualty insurers in Illinois. IIA provides consumer outreach, member services and addresses public policy issues. For more information click on www.illinoisinsurance.org.

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