



Title: Law enforcement officials throughout state cracking down on distracted driving
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Law enforcement officials throughout state cracking down on distracted driving

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SPRINGFIELD – Sixteen law enforcement officers have been hit while conducting traffic stops on the side of the road so far this year, and Illinois has had four traffic-related officer fatalities already in 2019. Each year, driving distractions contribute to thousands of accidents often resulting in costly property damage, personal injury and sadly, even death.

Both law enforcement and the Illinois Insurance Association urge motorists to protect emergency responders and other drivers by avoiding distractions, following traffic laws and committing to drive with focus.

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, encourages motorists to take a stand against this pervasive issue.

“Distracted driving causes problems for motorists as well as first responders, tow truck operators and construction workers,” Martin said.

“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.

Scott’s Law

Scott’s Law Chapter 625 of the Illinois Compiled Statutes mandates that upon approaching a stationary authorized emergency vehicle, when the authorized emergency vehicle is giving a signal by displaying alternately flashing red and blue lights or amber or yellow warning lights, a person who drives an approaching vehicle:

- proceed with due caution, yield the right-of-way by making

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a lane change into a lane not adjacent to that of the authorized emergency vehicle, if possible with due regard to safety and traffic conditions, if on a highway having at least 4 lanes with not less than 2 lanes proceeding in the same direction as the approach vehicle.

- proceed with due caution, reduce the speed of the vehicle, maintain a safe speed for road conditions, if changing lanes would be impossible or unsafe.

April 12-19, Sheriffs across the State of Illinois will participate in a traffic awareness campaign specifically aimed at Scott’s Law and distracted driving

violators. The ISA urges all motorists to obey all the rules of the road and stay focused when driving.

Martin said 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,” he added. “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.