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IT'S YOUR WRITE

Minimizing distractions for Distracted Driving Awareness Month

To the Editor:

Losing concentration behind the steering wheel contributes to thousands of crashes every year. These crashes cause property damage, injuries and deaths. Driving distractions put drivers, passengers, pedestrians, construction workers and emergency responders at risk.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, a national campaign to bring distracted driving attention. The Illinois Insurance Association and its member companies encourage drivers to minimize distractions whenever possible.

Cellphones are an obvious distraction, but there are many others. Road signs, billboards, crash scenes, construction zones, landscape vistas and GPS mapping are visual distractions. Manual distractions include eating, drinking, adjusting controls, reaching for something, or grooming. Any activity that causes a driver to lose concentration is a cognitive distraction.

Many vehicles today are equipped with hands-free cellphone technology. This technology still doesn't eliminate a cellphone's visual, manual, and cognitive distractions. Set up an auto-response to let callers know you can't talk while driving. Never text, email or record video behind the wheel.

Program the GPS and adjust the temperature controls, music selection and mirrors before leaving. Organize the trip essentials ahead of time. Insist that all passengers wear seat belts. Securely strap children into car seats. Crate pets for transportation. Avoid eating, drinking, grooming and smoking while driving.

Your driving habits directly impact traffic safety. Keep your eyes on the road, hands on the wheel, and focus on driving throughout the year.

Kevin J. Martin
Executive Director, Illinois Insurance Association, Springfield

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