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Reading Police Department to Participate in Statewide Texting Enforcement Crackdown

The Reading Police Department will join the 191 eligible Massachusetts law enforcement agencies in the national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* mobilization to crack down on motorists who text while driving. The campaign, which combines traditional and innovative enforcement strategies, is funded by a federal grant administered through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Highway Safety Division (EOPSS/HSD) from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). The mobilization begins April 10, 2015 and continues through May 1, 2015.

"Driving and texting is illegal and irresponsible. People who break our state's texting law will be stopped and fined. If you drive and text, you will pay," said Lieutenant David Stamatis.

Texting while driving was outlawed in Massachusetts effective September 30, 2010. Adult drivers who write, send, or read electronic messages or browse the Internet while driving face a \$100 fine for a first offense – even if the vehicle is stopped in traffic. Juvenile operators are entirely prohibited from using mobile phones and other electronic devices while driving, including to make phone calls. The fine for a juvenile first offense is \$100 and includes a 60 day license suspension and required completion of a driver attitudinal course.

These costly violations underscore the danger inherent in the use of electronic devices while driving. Nationally in 2013, there were 3,154 people killed and an estimated 424,000 people injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

According to the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute's 2012 "Teen Driver Distraction Study," 25% of teens respond to a text message at least once every time they drive. 20% of teens and 10% of parents admit that they have multi-message text conversations while driving.

"Texting and driving requires motorists to take their eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, and mind off the task of driving. It creates the proverbial 'perfect storm' for a crash, and no one has the right to put another person's life at risk like that," said Deputy Chief Mark D. Segalla.

"It's not that complicated: if you text and drive, we will see you, pull you over, and fine you. We're serious about enforcing texting laws," said Lieutenant David Stamatis.