



Bureau of Transportation Safety
and Technology
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS 66603-3754

NEWS RELEASE

Kansas Department of Transportation News Release

July 1, 2010

10-062

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS CONTACT:

Chris Bortz
KDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety and Technology
785-296-3756
or
Neal Thurman
Trozzolo Communications Group
816-842-8111

Texting-While-Driving Ban Debuts in Kansas

KDOT, law enforcement officials say lives will be saved

TOPEKA – A new state law banning all drivers from reading, writing or sending text messages goes into effect today.

With the law, Kansas joins 27 other states in banning a practice that the U.S. Department of Transportation calls “alarming” and which experts say makes serious crashes four times more likely to occur.

Under the law, state and local law enforcement officers can issue warnings to drivers for the first six months the law is in effect. Beginning Jan. 1, 2011, drivers caught texting will be subject to fines.

“Distractions such as texting while driving create a serious hazard for all motorists,” said Col. Terry Maple, superintendent of the Kansas Highway Patrol. “We encourage drivers to focus their full attention on driving, and conduct their electronic conversations when they arrive at their destination. By doing this, Kansas roads will be safer for all travelers.”

According to the Governor’s Highway Safety Association, 28 states and the District of Columbia now ban text messaging for all drivers. The federal government has banned texting while driving

by federal employees on duty and all commercial truck and bus drivers. An additional nine states prohibit text messaging by novice, or teen, drivers only.

Kansas Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller said texting is a particularly dangerous activity because it takes the driver's eyes off the road, and hands off the wheel. "Studies show that, on average, drivers who are texting take their eyes off the road for about five seconds per message," Miller said. "At 55 miles per hour, a vehicle would travel further than the length of a football field, plus its end zones – a total of 134 yards – in those five seconds. That should be all anyone needs to know to recognize the danger of texting and driving."

The practice has been found to be so dangerous that the federal department of transportation has set up a special website – <http://www.distraction.gov> – with information about distracted driving.

The site defines distracted driving as "any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing." While all distractions can endanger drivers' safety, texting is most alarming because it involves all three types of distractions:

- Visual – taking your eyes off the road
- Manual – taking your hands off the wheel
- Cognitive – taking your mind off what you're doing

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving a distracted driver, accounting for 16 percent of all traffic fatalities, and more than half a million were injured. It's a growing problem, with the proportion of drivers distracted at the time of fatal crashes increasing from 8 percent in 2004 to 11 percent in 2008.

###

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request.

For information about obtaining an alternative format, contact the Bureau of Transportation Information, 700 SW Harrison St., 2nd Fl West, Topeka, KS 66603-3754 or phone 785-296-3585 (Voice)/Hearing Impaired – 711.