



WESTPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Foti Koskinas
Chief of Police

Press Release



You Know Better

Law Enforcement Urging Drivers to Remember:

U Drive. U Text. U Pay.

[Westport, CT] – Over the past decade, distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation’s roads. The Westport Police Department is encouraging drivers to put down the phone and remember: ***U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*** In support of August’s National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the Westport Police Department will partner with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration from August 1 to August 30, 2020, for the national ***U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*** high-visibility enforcement effort. The goal of the campaign is to step up enforcement efforts to catch distracted, texting drivers and enforce distracted-driving laws.

According to NHTSA, between 2012 and 2018, nearly 23,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. In fact, there were 2,841 people killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2018. While this represents a 12-percent decrease in distracted driving fatalities from 2017, there is clearly more work to be done. There are still thousands of preventable deaths happening on our roads every year.

Over the years, millennials have become the worst texting-while-driving offenders, using their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to

NHTSA, young drivers 16 to 24 years old have also been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers have since 2007. In fact, in 2018, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) driving crashes died when those teen drivers were distracted at the time of the crash.

Violating Connecticut's distracted-driving laws can be costly with fines starting at \$150.00 and increasing to potentially as much as \$1,000.00 depending on the operator's driving history and the location of the offense.

Many drivers are guilty of a double standard when it comes to distracted driving. In its 2018 Traffic Safety Culture Index, the AAA Foundation reported that while nearly 96 percent of drivers believed it was very or extremely dangerous to read a text or email while driving, 4 out of 10 drivers admitted to doing so within the previous 30 days.

Chief Foti Koskinas adds that, "As the state's re-opening from the quarantines and closures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic continues to move forward, daily traffic in our community has concurrently increased significantly. Along with that marked increase in vehicular traffic have come a number of citizen complaints focused on the blatant disregard some motorists have shown for our motor vehicle laws. The Westport Police Department views this partnership as an opportunity to effectively combat some of the unsafe driving habits that have prompted many of these complaints, through both greater visibility of our officers on our most heavily traveled roads as well as through increased enforcement activity."

Drive Safe Every Trip

The Westport Police Department and NHTSA urge you to put your phone down when you get behind the wheel. If you need to text, then pull over and do not drive while doing so. If you're driving, follow these steps for a safe driving experience:

- If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
- Designate your passenger as your "designated texter." Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving. Cell phone use is habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone's "Do Not Disturb" feature,

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or put your phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your vehicle until you arrive at your destination.

Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. Break the cycle. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

For more information, visit www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov.

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