



# WESTPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## News Release

### Spring Distracted Driving Enforcement Campaign

(Westport, CT) **Distracted Driving Continues to Be One of the Leading Causes of Vehicle Crashes**

*"U Drive. U Text. U Pay." Enforcement Period Starts April 1*

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and starting tomorrow, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is launching the *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*, high-visibility enforcement campaign to crack down on distracted driving.

The national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* campaign is a partnership with State and local law enforcement, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). **In Connecticut in 2022, there were nearly 5,200 crashes attributed to distracted driving.**

Over the past decade, distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation's roads. At any given moment across America, approximately 660,000 drivers are using or manipulating electronic devices while driving – a number that has held steady for over a decade. According to NHTSA, in 2020, the last year of available national data, more than 3,100 lives were lost in crashes involving distracted drivers. **Approximately 8 percent of all fatal crashes in 2020 involved a distracted driver.**

The *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* campaign will increase efforts to enforce distracted-driving laws across Connecticut from April 1 to April 30, 2023, to reduce crashes and keep people safe.

**Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto said,** "If your attention is anywhere other than the road, you are driving distracted and putting yourself and others at risk of a crash, injury, or death. Distracted drivers often do not see the risk of their behavior until it's too late. We are counting on every single driver on our roadways to be a part of the solution by paying attention to avoid putting everyone on the road in danger."

**Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Commissioner James Rovella said,** "Every state trooper has seen the horrible consequences of drivers not paying attention to the road. The results can be heartbreaking. A distracted driver is a menace to other drivers on the road. The sad part is that all distracted

driving accidents can be avoided by simply ditching the distractions. If you must answer a text or a call, please pull over to a safe location, such as a commuter lot or rest area.”

Connecticut law prohibits the use of any hand-held mobile electronic device while operating a motor vehicle. Drivers who are 16 or 17 years of age are prohibited from using a cell phone or mobile device at any time, even with a hands-free accessory. Violating Connecticut’s distracted-driving laws can be costly. Drivers who are ticketed are fined \$200 for the first offense, \$375 for the second offense, and \$625 for the third and subsequent offenses.

The public is reminded of the following safety tips:

- When you get behind the wheel, be an example to your family and friends by putting your phone away. Texting and driving is not safe behavior.
- If you struggle to ignore your phone notifications, activate the “Do Not Disturb” feature or put your silenced device in your vehicle’s trunk, glove box, or back seat until you arrive safely at your destination.
- 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.
- Give control of your phone to your passenger. Let them respond to calls or messages.
- Never engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving.
- Even when hands-free, do not stream or watch movies or videos.
- If you see someone texting while driving, speak up. Tell them to stop what they are doing because it is dangerous. If someone catches you texting while driving and tells you to put your phone away, put it down.
- Remember, when you get behind the wheel, *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

For more information, visit [distraction.gov](https://www.distraction.gov).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 04/03/23**  
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