

For Immediate Release



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Driving While Distracted? It Will Cost You.

East Hartford Police to Apprehend Distracted Drivers as part of *U Drive. U Text. U Pay. Campaign*

East Hartford, CT—In support of April's National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the CT Department of Transportation Highway Safety Office, along with East Hartford Police, will be partnering with the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) from April 2 to April 30, 2019, 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 drivers and enforce distracted-driving laws.

Over the past decade, distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation's roads. According to NHTSA, between 2012-2017, nearly 20,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. In fact, there were 3,166 people killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2017. While this represents a 9 percent decrease in distracted driving fatalities from 2016 to 2017, there is clearly more work to be done.

"People know texting and driving is dangerous and illegal, but many do it anyway, putting others at risk," said Joseph Giuliatti, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Transportation. "Beginning April 2, you will see increased law enforcement efforts as officers will be stopping and ticketing anyone who is caught texting and driving."

Since 2015, nearly 30,000 crashes in Connecticut have involved a distraction - resulting in 41 fatal crashes.

"It seems that every day, you can look out of your car's window and see another driver using their cell phone," said East Hartford Police Chief Scott Sansom. "We all have cell phones, and we're all on them all the time," said East Hartford Police Chief Scott Sansom. "But when you drive, you have one responsibility: Drive safely and responsibly. Do the right thing—put your phone away when you get behind the wheel. You just may save someone's life."

Violating Connecticut's distracted-driving laws can be costly. Drivers who are ticketed are fined \$150 for the first offense, \$300 for the second offense, and \$500 for the third and subsequent offenses.

For more information, visit www.distraction.gov