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Media Release

BOONE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

1905 Indianapolis Ave.

Lebanon, IN 46052

Sheriff Michael T. Nielsen



April 7, 2022

Park the Phone: Motorists Urged to Avoid Distractions While Driving

Police stepping up patrols, today, April 7 to help curb distracted driving

Boone County, Indiana — The Boone County Traffic Safety Partnership (BCTSP) is joining forces with law enforcement agencies across the country for a one-day targeted enforcement campaign to combat texting and other forms of distracted driving. Today, motorists can expect to see increased roving and high-visibility patrols with officers on high alert for hands-free violations.

This is the second year for the *Connect 2 Disconnect* campaign, which is taking place during Distracted Driving Awareness Month and designed to reduce traffic crashes and fatalities. According to the latest data (<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813266>) from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), distracted driving claimed the lives of 3,142 people, or more than 8% of all traffic fatalities, in the U.S. in 2020.

The extra enforcement is funded by NHTSA with grants administered by the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute.

“We’re sending a clear message that driving with anything less than your full attention is dangerous and unacceptable,” said Boone County Sheriff, Michael Nielsen. “Distracted driving kills and is completely preventable. It’s important to keep that in mind the next time you feel the need to send a text or check your email when behind the wheel.”

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts attention away from safely operating a vehicle. It can be visual, manual, or cognitive and includes everything from eating to listening to loud music to more recent trends like “vlogging” or video blogging.

While all forms are considered dangerous, texting continues to be the most prevalent, especially among millennials and Gen Z. Research from NHTSA shows that young drivers, ages 16 to 24, have been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers since 2007.

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"There's a time and a place for everything, and when you're driving isn't the right time to be recording a video or taking a selfie," said Devon McDonald, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute Executive Director. "If your eyes are off the road, you're putting yourself and others at risk. It's like driving blindfolded."

Indiana took aim at distracted driving in 2020 when it passed the hands-free device driving law, which prohibits the use of holding a mobile device while driving. Since then, law enforcement agencies have been working overtime to educate motorists about the law, issuing more than 6,000 hands-free citations and almost twice as many warnings last year alone.

"Distracted drivers are not only a risk to themselves, but they're a danger to everyone on the road," said Gov. Eric J. Holcomb. "Driving requires your full attention and should be your one and only focus behind the wheel. We can reduce so many senseless and preventable tragedies by simply putting down the phone while driving."

As part of the *Connect 2 Disconnect* campaign, the department is asking motorists to do their part by putting down the phone and driving distraction-free. Violators of the hands-free law could face a Class C infraction with fines up to \$500 and have points added to their license.

For more information on distracted driving, visit www.distraction.gov, or for more information about Indiana's hands-free device driving law, visit www.HandsFreeIndiana.com.

To learn more about The Boone County Sheriff's Office please visit:
<http://boonecountyindianasheriff.com/>.

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