

OPP will make it harder for distracted drivers to hide, starting this weekend

Motorists who talk on cell phones, text or engage in other forms of distraction while driving will be easier to spot, starting this holiday weekend.

OPP will be dedicating more police vehicles to enforce Ontario's distracted driving legislation full-time. Ten unmarked police vehicles will take to the roads over the Labour Day Long Weekend and police anticipate that they will prove to be a much-needed measure to make Ontario roads safer.

Thirty-five people have died so far this year in motor vehicle collisions (within OPP jurisdiction) in which an inattentive driver was a contributing factor. In 2013, 86 people died in distraction-related collisions. This category of road fatality surpassed both impaired-related and speed-related deaths investigated by the OPP last year. Since Ontario's distracted driving laws were introduced in 2009, OPP has investigated 374 inattentive-related road deaths (as of Aug. 25).

Our officers remain deeply concerned with the number of drivers they see driving distracted, especially those who talk on cell phones or even worse ? texting, which is one of the most dangerous activities to engage in while driving,? said Chief Superintendent Chuck Cox, commander of the OPP Highway Safety Division. ?Regardless of how safe a driver, passenger or pedestrian you may be, you should be equally concerned about the number of motorists who risk your life by not paying full attention to safely sharing the road with you.?

The vehicles are being implemented on the heels of a survey of licensed Ontario students, in which almost 50 per cent of Grade 12 students admitted to texting while driving. As of June 30, OPP had laid more than 10,000 charges to Ontario motorists who were caught driving while distracted.

Research shows that there is a common mind set among drivers that they can talk on their cell phone, text, or engage in other driver distractions and do so safely. For this reason, when you are in a vehicle and the person driving engages in any form of distraction, take charge of your own safety. Never be afraid to speak up. Tell the driver to focus entirely on driving and remind them that they are placing your life in danger and that you have the right to be safe.

With school buses and pedestrians travelling to and from schools beginning next week, OPP is urging all motorists who engage in distraction to come to terms with the reality that there is no such thing as a ?safe? distracted driver and that all distracted drivers pose a threat on the road.

With many Ontarians heading out to take advantage of the last summer long weekend of the year, OPP is reminding the public that they will be highly visible on roads, waterways and trails this weekend. Police are asking the public to do their part by keeping themselves safe and contributing to an incident-free weekend.