

OPP running a distracted driving campaign this week

OPP are in the middle of a distracted driving campaign this week.

It runs until this coming Monday (April 22) and police are looking to the public to help make it a historic success.

To help kick off the campaign, the OPP asked motorists to take a hard line on distracted driving once and for all with a life-long commitment to keep all hand-held devices out of reach and out of use while behind the wheel.

Police maintain that those who use hand-held phones while driving also put the lives of their passengers at risk. They are asking passengers to take matters into their own hands by telling those who drive them while distracted to put down the phone and leave it alone.

OPP are issuing an important reminder that, while texting is among the most dangerous activities to carry out while driving, distracted driving refers to all forms of distracted or inattentive driving, such as talking on the phone, eating and drinking, personal grooming and tending to children in the backseat. During the campaign, officers are targeting these and any other forms of distraction they observe as impairing a motorist's driving ability.

Drivers need to remember that the real danger to the motoring public lies in the distraction, not the device, said Chief Superintendent Don Bell, commander of the OPP Highway Safety Division. In 2012, 83 people were killed in motor vehicle collisions within OPP jurisdiction in which distracted driving was a causal factor and that surpassed our impaired driving fatalities in 2012.

According to OPP, officers laid close to 16,000 distracted driving charges across the province last year (2012). They continue to see careless drivers texting and talking on their phones and engaging in other forms of distraction every day.

While the OPP is firmly committed to enforcing distracted driving laws during the campaign and throughout the year, drivers themselves can end these needless deaths by recognizing how they contribute to risks on our roads, commented Deputy Commissioner Larry Beechey. Motorists need to realize that they may need to change their own driving behaviour to improve road safety for everyone.

OPP are asking Ontarians to share their stories on Facebook about the dangerous driver behaviour or near-misses they have observed from motorists driving distracted. By doing so, they can help drivers think about their own driving habits and how they are contributing to dangerous behaviour. Go to www.facebook.com/ontarioprovincialpolice

Distracted Driving is one of the big four high-risk driving behaviours which leads to serious or fatal motor vehicle collisions on provincial roadways. The OPP Provincial Traffic Safety Program incorporates high police visibility, measurable outcomes, professional traffic stops and public education in their ongoing efforts to save lives on Ontario roads, trails and waterways.