Community Partnership Connection



What You Need to Know About the New Cell Phone & Texting Laws



New state legislation aimed at decreasing the number of accidents caused by distracted driving will go into effect on October 1, 2011. The Washoe County Sheriff's Office has received numerous inquiries about Nevada's new cell phone and texting laws and offers the following information for drivers.

"The goal of Nevada's new 'hand free' legislation is to save lives," Washoe County Assistant Sheriff Tim Kuzanek said. According to information from AAA's Foundation for Traffic Safety, distracted driving, including the use of cell phones is one of the major contributors to automobile accidents. Statistics show that between 4,000 and 8,000 crashes related to distracted driving occur every day in the United States. In the course of a year, distracted driving such as cell phone use, eating or drinking while driving,

or anything else that takes your mind and eyes off the road, contributes to as many as one half of the 6 million crashes reported annually in this country. A 2010 AAA study also showed that the majority of drivers (62 percent) feel that talking on a cell phone is a very serious threat to safety, but they do not always behave accordingly or believe that others share these views. In fact, nearly 70 percent of those surveyed admitted to talking on their phones and 24 percent said they read or sent text messages or emails while driving in the previous month.

Nevada's new texting law "makes it a crime for a person to manually type or enter text into a cellular telephone or other similar device, or to send or read data using any such device, while operating a motor vehicle. The law further prohibits a person from using such a device for voice communications unless the device is used with an accessory which allows the person to communicate without using his or her hands, with certain limited exceptions."

According to this new legislation, drivers must use hands-free equipment in order to make or receive phone calls on cell phones or other wireless communications devices. Exceptions include emergency personnel, licensed amateur radio operators who are communicating certain public information, employees of public utilities who are responding to emergencies, or drivers who are reporting emergencies or responding to dangerous situations. GPS devices are not included in this legislation.

In accordance with the law, law enforcement will issue only warnings to violators from October 1 through the end of 2011. Fines will be imposed beginning in 2012. Assistant Sheriff Kuzanek advises drivers that one of the best ways to avoid violating the new law is to plan ahead. Use of hands-free devices such as a blue tooth should be considered for motorists in Washoe County.

(See page 3 for Suggestions While Driving)

Back to School Reminders (Part 1 of 2)



Reminders for your kids:

Cross the street at corners, using traffic signals and crosswalks.

Never run out into the streets or cross in between parked cars.

Make sure they always walk in front of the bus where the driver can see them.

Traffic Distractions: Slow Down and Watch for Children

With summer ending and the start of school just around the corner, there are more distractions when driving than ever, so the Sheriff's Office is asking drivers to slow down and be on the alert for children walking to school. Here are some precautions:

Reminders for drivers:

Slow down and be especially alert in the residential neighborhoods and school zones. Come to a full stop and check both ways at stop signs and red lights. Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs.

Watch for children on and near the road in the morning and after school hours.

Watch for school bus stop signs. When a school bus stops with brake lights flashing or the stop sign raised, motorists from either direction must stop until all children have safety crossed the road.

Reduce any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings. Put down your phone and don't talk or text while driving.

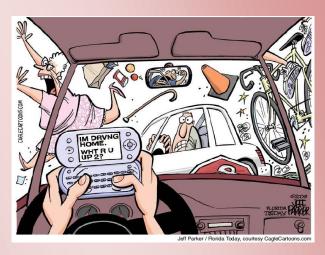
RAVEN Receives Authorization to Help Fight Fires On Department of Interior Lands

The Washoe County Sheriff's Office Regional Aviation Enforcement (RAVEN) Unit was certified on July 6th to fly fire suppression missions on Department of Interior lands. The certification, or carding process, involves a rigorous and thorough inspection conducted by the Bureau of Land Management's Aviation Management Directorate. The inspection involved a review of all maintenance procedures and aircraft conditions, as well as check flights for the two firefighting qualified pilots. Immediately after RAVEN was certified, they began fighting fires within Washoe County.

Both of the pilots are military trained Washoe County Deputies with previous firefighting experience. The two pilots have received extensive training in operating the county's HH-1H Huey helicopter and its' special firefighting equipment, particularly the 323 gallon water tank.

"This is the culmination of a three year effort to get our aircraft, pilots and mechanics fully trained and qualified to carry out this important mission", stated RAVEN Chief Pilot Deputy Doug Russell. "It was definitely a team effort, and we just couldn't have achieved this without the combined efforts of the entire RAVEN team, our fire partners, and Sheriff's executive staff".

Since the unit's initial carding in early July, RAVEN pilots have fought six fires, dropping over 27,800 gallons of water in their firefighting efforts.



Dangerous and Deadly Distracted Driving

The Governors Highway Safety Association offers the following suggestions while driving:

Turn it off. Turn off your phone or switch to silent mode before you get in the car.

Spread the word. Set up a special message to tell callers that you are driving and you'll get back to them as soon as possible, or sign up for as service that offers this.

Find a Safe Place. If you need to make a call, find a legal and safe place to pull over and park first.

Use your passengers. Ask a passenger to make the call for you.

X the Text. Don't ever text and drive, surf the web or read your email while driving. It is dangerous and against the law in most states.

Prepare. Review maps and directions before you start to drive. If you need help when you are on the road, ask a passenger to help or pull over to a safe location to review the map/directions again.

Secure your pets. Pets can be a big distraction in the car. Always secure your pets property before you start to drive.

Keep the kids safe. Pull over to a safe location to address situations with your children in the car.

Focus on the task at hand. Refrain from smoking, eating, drinking, reading, and any other activity that takes your mind and eyes off the road.

Work Crews Clean Up Dump Sites

Washoe County Sheriff's Office community service crews cleaned up three illegal dumps sites in August thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation of Western Nevada's Truckee River Fund.

Through this grant the Sheriff's Office was able to rent dumpsters to properly clean dump sites located in Lemmon Valley, Golden Valley, and open space areas just north of the intersection of McCarran and Pyramid Way.

"Even when illegal dump sites are not located near flowing water, ground water can become contaminated by hazardous materials from a large, uncontrolled waste heap," Brooke Howard, Detention Programs Coordinator for the Sheriff's Office, said. "Through this grant, our crews are able to properly clean dump sites which could directly impact the Truckee River and Truckee Meadows as a whole."

Since 2008, the Truckee River Fund has awarded the Sheriff's Office close to \$90,000 in grants to fund projects that address local quality of life and public safety issues. In addition to the clean-up dumpsters, grants support the hiring of a work crew supervisor and the purchase of equipment needed for a number of river bank projects such as weeding invasive plant species, removing debris left along the river from homeless camps, and helping to protect trees from beaver damage.



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RESULTS FROM DUI SATURATION ENFORCEMENT IN JUNE/JULY

From June 17th through July 11th, the Washoe County Sheriff's Office had extra coverage targeting impaired drivers. The additional deputies were funded by a grant awarded to the Sheriff's Office by the Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety. In addition to DUI saturation enforcement, the Sheriff's Office assisted with two separate DUI checkpoints. The first was hosted by the Reno Police Department on July 25th in Reno and the second was hosted by the Nevada Highway Patrol on July 4th in Incline Village.

The Sheriff's Office DUI saturation enforcement units (Sheriff's Office stats only) initiated 139 traffic stops, with 12 drivers being arrested for DUI. Of those 139 traffic stops, 32 citations were issued for speeding violations and 27 citations were issued for equipment violations. Additionally, 18 people were cited for failure to wear a seat restraint and 7 drivers were issued citations for failing to properly restrain their child.

The Sheriff's Office would like to remind everyone that driving impaired or simply being a passenger with someone who is impaired is not worth the danger. The consequences are severe, if not deadly. The Sheriff's Office encourages the public to report possible impaired drivers by calling 911 or 832-WCSO (9276).