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The Beverly Police Dept. Joins Statewide Distracted Driving Effort to Increase Public Safety

The Beverly Police Dept. will partner with the 202 eligible local Massachusetts law enforcement agencies and the Massachusetts State Police in the national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* mobilization to crack down on motorists who text while driving. The campaign, which combines traditional and innovative enforcement strategies, is funded by a federal grant administered through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Highway Safety Division (EOPSS/HSD) from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA). The mobilization begins on **April 8, 2016 and continues through April 29, 2016.**

"Driving and texting is illegal and irresponsible. People who break our state's texting law will be stopped and fined. Distracted driving is a major problem in Massachusetts, and we're trying to keep the public safe by fining violators. If you drive and text, you will pay," said Chief John LeLacheur.

Texting while driving was outlawed in Massachusetts effective September 30, 2010. Adult drivers who write, send, or read electronic messages or browse the Internet while driving face a \$100 fine for a first offense – even if the vehicle is stopped in traffic. Juvenile operators are entirely prohibited from using mobile phones and other electronic devices while driving, including to make phone calls. The fine for a juvenile first offense is \$100 and includes a 60 day license suspension and required completion of a driver attitudinal course.

These costly violations underscore the danger inherent in the use of electronic devices while driving. In 2014, across the United States, 3,179 people were killed and an additional 431,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

A 2013 study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) found that any activity that diverts a driver's eyes from the road for two seconds or more, such as texting or otherwise manipulating a mobile device, increases crash risk by a factor of three. This level of impairment is similar to driving with a blood alcohol concentration of .08.

"Texting and driving requires motorists to take their eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, and mind off the task of driving. It creates the proverbial 'perfect storm' for a crash, and no one has the right to put another person's life at risk like that," said Chief John LeLacheur.

"It's not that complicated: if you text and drive, we will see you, pull you over, and fine you. We're serious about enforcing texting laws," said Chief John LeLacheur