



State of New Hampshire

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PRESS RELEASE

NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENTS OF INSURANCE AND SAFETY REMINDE GRANITE STATERS THAT APRIL IS DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH

*Use of Electronic Devices While Driving is Dangerous and Prohibited by State
Hands-Free Law*

CONCORD, New Hampshire – As April is designated “National Distracted Driving Awareness Month”, the New Hampshire Insurance Department (NHID) and Department of Safety (DOS) are reminding Granite Staters that distracted driving – including the use of electronic devices – is dangerous, illegal and costly.

According to the New Hampshire Office of Highway Safety, there have been 42 fatal crashes with distraction or inattention as the primary causation from 2014 through 2020. It is estimated that in 2020, distracted driving accounted for as much as 30% of all crashes throughout New Hampshire, and the use of portable electronic mobile devices accounted for an average of 11% of those distraction related crashes.

“Distracted driving is dangerous and irresponsible. If you’re using your phone while driving, then you’re not driving,” said New Hampshire State Police Captain Christopher Vetter, Commander of the Office of Highway Safety. “Your eyes need to stay on the road, your hands

on the wheel, and your focus on driving. Put your phone away when you get behind the wheel – it will save your life and the lives of those around you.”

NH RSA 265:79-c specifically prohibits the use of “any hand-held mobile electronic device capable of providing voice or data communication” while driving or stopped in traffic. This includes mobile phones as well as navigation systems.

“Distracted driving is extremely dangerous. It’s not only a potentially deadly endeavor, it can be costly to insurance consumers, as well,” said New Hampshire Insurance Commissioner Christopher Nicolopoulos. “In addition to the resulting fines, consumers may see a significant increase in their insurance premiums if they receive a distracted driving ticket. We urge Granite Staters to drive safely and avoid any distractions when they’re behind the wheel.”

In New Hampshire, fines for distracted driving tickets range from \$100 plus penalty assessment for a first offense, \$250 plus penalty assessment for a second offense and \$500 plus penalty assessment for any subsequent offense within a 24-month period.

“Safety should be the number one concern for drivers on New Hampshire’s roadways – for themselves, their passengers and their fellow citizens,” said Department of Safety Assistant Commissioner Eddie Edwards. “Our message is simple: It is illegal and potentially deadly to use an electronic device while you’re operating a motor vehicle. Stay focused on safe vehicle operation and wait to talk or text until you’re at your destination.”

Beginning Thursday, April 7, 2022, the New Hampshire Office of Highway Safety and local law enforcement partners will take part in “Connect 2 Disconnect”, a national distracted driving enforcement and awareness initiative. The goals of this initiative are to demonstrate a commitment to enforcing texting laws and to reduce traffic crashes caused by distracted drivers, ultimately preventing injuries and deaths associated with cell phone use and texting while driving.

“As we kick off National Distracted Driving Month, AAA wants to remind drivers about the importance of focusing on the road ahead and not on their smartphones,” said Daniel Goodman, Public Affairs Manager at AAA Northern New England. “Help reduce the number of these preventable tragedies by putting down your phone – because lives depend on it. Just like you wouldn’t drive intoxicated, don’t drive intexticated.”

The New Hampshire Insurance Department Can Help

The New Hampshire Insurance Department’s mission is to promote and protect the public good by ensuring the existence of a safe and competitive insurance marketplace through the development and enforcement of the insurance laws of the State of New Hampshire. Contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your insurance coverage at 1-800-852-

3416 or (603) 271-2261, or by email at consumerservices@ins.nh.gov. For more information, visit <https://www.nh.gov/insurance>.

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About the Department:

The New Hampshire Department of Safety is one of the largest departments of state government, with more than 2,200 full-time, part-time, non-classified, and seasonal employees functioning in both uniformed and civilian capacities throughout the State. The Department affects the lives of all New Hampshire residents and visitors by enforcing criminal, motor vehicle and boating laws, and providing for fire safety, fire and emergency medical training, emergency communications and disaster planning. Established by the New Hampshire General Court in 1961, the Department consists of the divisions of Administration, Emergency Services and Communications, Fire Safety (Office of the State Fire Marshal), Fire Standards and Training & Emergency Medical Services, Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Motor Vehicles and State Police.

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