



*****For Immediate Release*****

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Washington State Patrol Focuses on Distracted Driving

Olympia – Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers will conduct a statewide emphasis on distracted driving from Friday, June 21 through Sunday, June 23, 2019.

The Washington Traffic Safety Commission lists distracted driving as the cause of 30% of statewide traffic fatalities as well as the cause of 23% of all serious injury collisions in Washington. In 2018, WSP contacted over 20,000 drivers for distracted driving, 3,000 more than the previous year.

According to RCW 46.61.672, drivers are prohibited from using a personal electronic device while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway— which includes when stopped in traffic or at a traffic light. Personal electronic devices aren't just limited to cell phones, but also includes laptop, tablets, gaming devices, etc. A driver is only allowed the minimal use of a finger to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function on the device. However, drivers are allowed to use their phones if:

- It's hands-free and can be started by using a single touch or swipe of a finger
- You are parked or stopped out of the flow of traffic and safely off the roadway
- Calling 911

The penalty for distracted driving is a \$136 citation for the first offense. If you're issued another citation within five years, the penalty raises to at least \$234. Additionally, each offense is reported to your insurance companies.

Drivers can also be penalized for a secondary violation of dangerously distracted driving under RCW 46.61.673, with an additional \$99 penalty if a driver commits a traffic violation because they were distracted.

WSP Chief, John Batiste put it succinctly, "There is no call, text, e-mail or update that is worth a life, yours or the person in the car you hit." He added, "Drivers, please pay attention. You matter and we want you to arrive at your destination safely."

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