National Distracted Driving Awareness month - April 2019

# Overview

## Project Background

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|  | April is Distracted Driving Month  NHTSA leads the fight nationally against distracted driving by educating Americans about its dangers and partnering with the States and local police to enforce laws against distracted driving that help keep us safe. NHTSA’s efforts on distracted driving and other risky driving behaviors are building partnerships with the States and local police. The States determine laws affecting distracted driving, but NHTSA provides Federal investments in the locally driven strategies that address the States’ specific needs. One of the highlights of this relationship comes during April’s Distracted Driving Awareness Month, which pairs a national advertising campaign with a law enforcement crackdown called U Drive. U Text. U Pay.  Distracted driving month is an opportunity for States and local law enforcement to implement a variety of activities to include public information, education, and outreach, as well as highly-visible enforcement and communications. NHTSA provides resources to help States and local police develop coordinated efforts.  NHTSA’s Distracted Driving Awareness campaign runs from April 8 – 15, 2019, with the media advertising campaign starting on April 8, and the coordinated enforcement period running from April 11-15, 2019. Social norming messaging and awareness activities are highly encouraged the remainder of the month.  The 2019 campaign encourages partners to participate in a coordinated enforcement initiative, Connect to Disconnect, C2D. |

## Project Description

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|  | *Connect to Disconnect (C2D) is a 1-day national distracted driving enforcement and awareness initiative coordinated by State Highway Safety Offices and Law enforcement agencies across the country. Law enforcement will join together to send a zero-tolerance message to the public: driving distracted on America’s roadways will result in a ticket.*  *C2D aims to spread awareness about the dangers and consequences of distracted driving and demonstrate a nationwide commitment to enforcing cell phone and texting bans. The initiative will be comprehensive, including creative enforcement strategies, earned and paid media, social media, and awareness efforts. The goal of this initiative is to reduce traffic crashes caused by distracted drivers and ultimately prevent injuries and deaths associated with cell phone use and texting while driving.* |

## High-Level Requirements

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|  | *NHTSA requests that all States participate in C2D and organize an enforcement and awareness plan for the month, to include participation in C2D. The initiative will take place on the first day of the 5-day distracted driving enforcement period, April 11, 2019.*  *Local law enforcement is asked to conduct a 4-hour enforcement operation where officers are citing drivers for violating the State’s or local jurisdiction’s cell phone or texting ban. NHTSA headquarters will provide a list of potential enforcement strategies that have been documented to have been successful in enforcing local laws, as well as support materials to help promote the initiative.*  *NHTSA Headquarters and Regional Offices will work together to identify C2D activities across the country on this day. This information will be shared with all participating partners to include in local media coverage or social media messaging to help elevate this dangerous behavior among the driving public, as well as inform drivers that distraction will not be tolerated.* |

## Partners

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|  | The following partners are asked to collaborate on this initiative:   * NHTSA Headquarters, Occupant Protection Division and Office of Communications and Consumer Information * NHTSA Regional Offices * State Highway Safety Offices * State Police * County and Municipal Law Enforcement Agencies * Law Enforcement Liaisons * International Association of Chiefs of Police * National Sheriff’s Association * Community Traffic Safety Coalitions |

## Implementation Plan

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|  | A C2D Plan could include the following elements:   * Enforcement plan – time of enforcement operation, location, identified enforcement strategy, number of dedicated officers * Media outreach – interviews, press release * Social media plan – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter messaging * Promotion of the overall Distracted Driving Awareness Month and increased enforcement with community partners * Distracted Driving observations before and after the enforcement effort to document and demonstrate the extent of the problem to the community. |

## High-level C2D Timeline

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|  | C2D Enforcement Initiative – April 11, 2019  Time: 4-hour enforcement period determined by the participating law enforcement agency  Location: A single or multiple locations as determined by the participating law enforcement agencies  Enforcement Strategy: There are a number of strategies that have been successfully implemented and documented during the three NHTSA Distracting Driving Demonstration Projects. These strategies have been listed and described for consideration for use with this initiative and are available through your NHTSA Regional Office. See Table 1 for a list of distracted driving enforcement techniques. Section 7 provides a description of each enforcement technique.  Media: Press release the day of the event, schedule coverage the day of the event or shortly after to discuss the results of the effort. Interviews with local TV, Radio or newspapers are encouraged. |

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| **ENFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES BY NHTSA DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS AND SITES** | | | | | | |
| **3 ENFORCEMENT PROJECTS** | **1. High Visibility Enforcement of Distracted Driving Laws** | | **2. High visibility Enforcement of Distracting Driving Law- Expansion to larger areas** | | **3. Evaluating the Enforceability of Texting Laws: Strategies tested in CT and MA** | |
| **DEMONSTRATION PROJECT SITES** | **Hartford,**  **Connecticut** | **Syracuse,**  **New York** | **California** | **Delaware** | **Connecticut** | **Massachusetts** |
| **ENFORCEMENT TECHNIQUES USED** | | | | | | |
| **Spotter Technique** | **🗸** |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |
| **Roving Patrols** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |
| **Unmarked Vehicles** | **🗸** | **🗸** |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |
| **Motorcycle Patrols** |  |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |  |
| **Intersection enforcement** |  |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |
| **Stationary/Covert Enforcement** | **🗸** | **🗸** |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |
| **Lane Splitting** |  |  | **🗸** |  | **🗸** |  |
| **Saturation Patrols** |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |  |  |
| **Checkpoints** |  | **🗸** | **🗸** | **🗸** |  |  |

**Table 1. Distracted Driving Enforcement Strategies**

## *These enforcement techniques were used in three NHTSA demonstration projects, in six different locations. The chart above highlights which techniques were used and where. For more information about the each of these demonstration projects, please see the following reports and/or research note:*

## <https://www.nhtsa.gov/document/evaluation-nhtsa-distracted-driving-demonstration-projects-connecticut-and-new-york>

## <https://www.nhtsa.gov/document/traffic-tech-distracted-driving-high-visibility-enforcement-demonstrations-california-and>

## <https://www.nhtsa.gov/document/four-high-visibility-enforcement-demonstration-waves-connecticut-and-new-york-reduce-hand>

## <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/documents/812367-textenforce_ctandma.pdf>

## Distracted Driving Enforcement Technique Descriptions

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|  | ***Spotter Technique***  *When an officer, usually standing on the side of the road in plain clothing, radios or calls ahead to another officer whenever a passing motorist using a cell phone is observed. The second officer typically makes the stop and writes the ticket. Use of spotters on overpasses and elevated roadways, as well as the use of taller SUVs and trucks, can be effective in identifying drivers manipulating electronic devices given the elevated observation angle.*  ***Roving Patrols***  *Strategically placing patrol vehicles where officers can observe drivers discretely, while actively seeking out drivers using cell phones or texting. Officers have reported that the use of higher vantage points, SUVs, and unmarked vehicles are particularly effective tools to identify violators. Roving patrols that target high risk and high traffic volume areas in their communities have been successful.*  *This technique can also be done with two officers in one vehicle where the passenger and calls out the violation, followed by the driver initiating the stop. The advantage with this approach is safety, allowing the driver of the unmarked vehicle to focus on driving.*  ***Unmarked Vehicles***  *Utilizing unmarked cars and officers in plain clothing. Unmarked vehicles may be an advantage during roving patrols if permitted by State law. The use of unmarked vehicles, especially SUV’s with tinted glass can be effective in cities/towns.*  ***Motorcycle Patrols***  *A motorcycle provides several advantages to the detection of violators. A motorcycle has a higher vantage point offering a better view into a passenger vehicle than from a typical patrol vehicle. This is useful for directly observing a driver who uses a phone below the window frame. Another advantage is an officer’s maneuverability on a motorcycle. An officer on a motorcycle can do things that officers in full-size passenger vehicles cannot do. Motorcycle officers, for example, can drive right up beside an offender, oftentimes unnoticed, and look down into the vehicle and more easily observe violations.*  ***Intersection enforcement***  *At intersections, an unmarked vehicle is parked perpendicular to traffic in a location that provides the officer an unobstructed view of traffic. Officers can primarily watch for texting while driving violations, in addition to other obvious traffic violations. This strategy is particularly appealing to officers, who find it to be an easy way to observe and enforce the law.*  ***Stationary/Covert Enforcement***  *Officers parked in either marked or unmarked vehicles look for cell phone/texting violations: on limited access highways; on secondary roads at intersections, parking lots, or roundabouts/rotaries; in an elevated vehicle such as an SUV or pickup truck, sometimes with tinted windows; or on highway ramps*  ***Lane Splitting***  *Lane-splitting refers to a two-wheeled vehicle (motorcycle) moving between roadway lanes of vehicles that are proceeding in the same direction. This allows a motor officer to drive between lanes and observe violations, especially at controlled intersections. This technique is quite useful for citing violators during HVE waves, but is not legal in all States.*  ***Saturation Patrols***  *A saturation patrol (also called a blanket patrol, “wolf pack,” or dedicated patrol) consists of a large number of law enforcement officers patrolling a specific area for a set time to increase visibility of enforcement and identify texting and driving violations. Multiple agencies often combine and concentrate their resources to conduct saturation patrols.*  ***Checkpoints***  *NHTSA defines a sobriety checkpoint as the stopping of vehicles, or a specific sequence of vehicles (i.e., every fifth vehicle), at a predetermined fixed location to detect drivers who are impaired by alcohol or other drugs. One purpose of a sobriety checkpoint is to increase the perceived risk of detection and arrest for individuals who might otherwise decide to drive impaired. This is a checkpoint’s general deterrence effect. The fact that all, or a proportion of, vehicles are stopped reduces the impaired drivers’ confidence that they can avoid detection by concealing or compensating for alcohol or drug impairment. The checkpoint tactic can be applied to distracted driving as long as it is legally permissible.*  *Checkpoints generally work well to generate news coverage and result in various violations being cited in addition to any distracted driving violations.* |

## Sustained Distracted Driving Enforcement and Communication

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|  | *All communities are encouraged to engage in high-visibility enforcement activities throughout the month of April, and most specifically for the duration of the 5-day enforcement period (April 11-15, 2019). This enforcement period is an opportunity to heighten local awareness about the dangers of distracted driving, the increased enforcement efforts planned, and to strengthen the community’s perception that they may be cited for violating distracted driving laws.*  A larger collaborative effort that engages law enforcement agencies across municipal, county or even state borders would be ideal. Coordinated enforcement efforts is an ideal opportunity to raise awareness of the seriousness of the problem and could lead to mass media coverage. Consider the following: |

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| ***Sustained Enforcement during the month*** | ***Media Communications*** |
| * ***Daily enforcement is encouraged,*** * *Integrated distracted driving enforcement during regular traffic enforcement patrols, and* * *Tracking citation data and ultimately sharing these numbers internally can help encourage law enforcement to step up enforcement efforts, as well as lead to adjustments in operations.* * *Enforcement tactics to consider:*    + *Use an intersection to observe and enforcement the law,*   + *Consider a high traffic volume area where potential stops are safe,*   + *Select a location that provides a good vantage point, and*   + *Consider the spotter technique to enforce the law.* | * ***Products for Enforcement Action Kit****(PEAK) are available for use and include earned media materials such:*    + *2019 Anti-Distracted Driving Enforcement Campaign earned media materials –*      - *Fact Sheet / Talking Points*     - *Sample News Release (Pre-Event)*     - *Sample News Release (Post-Event)*     - *Sample Op Ed*   *Take advantage of campaign materials* [*https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/distracted-driving/u-drive-u-text-u-pay/peak-enforcement-kit*](https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/distracted-driving/u-drive-u-text-u-pay/peak-enforcement-kit) |
| ***High Visibility Enforcement Operation*** | ***Distracted Driving Resources*** |
| * *National Enforcement Initiative*    + *Connect to Disconnect (C2D) 4-hour enforcement initiative on April 11, 2019 to conduct a coordinate enforcement operation with multiple agencies across the country;*   + *Determine a specific Time of Day to conduct the enforcement operation,*   + *Capitalize on the effort and share the news via an earned media event or press release.* | *NHTSA’s website is always a great resource for statistics, laws, campaign material downloads and more. Follow the link and explore.*  [*https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving#nhtsa-action*](https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving#nhtsa-action) |

## Distraction Driving Observations

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|  | *Prior to and after the Distracted Driving enforcement period, consider observing driver behavior in your immediate community(ies). While citation and crash data are invaluable, these data do not always provide an accurate assessment of the problem. There is value in taking the temperature locally. While not scientific, there is a low-cost method for conducting observations and providing a snapshot of the extent of the problem.*  Distracted Driving observations can be relatively straightforward to conduct and require relatively modest training and other resources. Consider using two people per observation location -- one to call out violations, the other to document the findings. A good location and time of day are important considerations. Below find suggestions to help plan and conduct an observation. An observation form, specific to distracted driving has been developed to assist with documentation of such observations. |

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| ***Distracted Driving Observations – Selecting an observation site and time frame*** |
| * *Intersection or slow moving roadway;* * *High traffic volume location;* * *Elevated vantage point; and* * *Mid-day or mid-afternoon time frame.* |
| ***Documenting observations*** |
| * *Utilize Distracted Driving Observation Form to document the violations;* * *Gender is a valuable piece of information as you use this information to plan media communications materials, outreach programs and more;* * *There is also room to document estimated age and vehicle type. The extent of the data collection is completely up to each agency;* * *The more data collected, the more robust a program and strategies can be developed and tailored to each community; and* * *At minimum collect 100-200 observations each time an observation is conducted.* |
| ***Data findings and uses*** |
| * *Analyze your findings -*   + *What percentages of drivers are violating the local law (i.e., the hand-held mobile device ban or the texting ban)?*   + *What approximate age and gender are these drivers?*   + *How different were the findings compared to what you thought was happening in your community?* * *Use the first observation data as baseline data. Conduct another observation after the enforcement period and compare the two observations- what was the percentage of cell phone and texting while driving after the enforcement campaign?* * *Use the data to help consider the following question: How can these drivers be reached and encouraged to make a different choice?* * *Capitalize on the data to keep the community engaged: share the data in a press release, on FB or Tweet the results, use it as a teachable piece of local information, use the data on local business or church marquees.* |

## Distraction Observation Guidelines

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|  | Distracted driving is a complex issue with its’ own set of challenges, first, data collection continues to be a challenge, making it difficult to gauge the extent of the problem, the behavior associated with cell phone use and texting is far more complex than is currently understood, and enforcing the law comes with a set of challenges that are unique to each state’s law. In an effort to understand the extent of the problem, how to best direct enforcement resources, and how to organize outreach and awareness efforts, the following distracted driving guidelines will help localities with an easy to use protocol for observing and documenting cell phone use/texting/manipulation of a cell phone while driving. This non-scientific protocol will provide local communities/law enforcement agencies with an added set of data and a local snapshot of the problem.  **Schedule:** Observations should be conducted at the same time of day and day of week. Observations cannot be made in rainy or other inclement weather conditions. Time of day is the discretion of the recording agency. However, if rush hour traffic consists of an overrepresentation of motorists outside the community, then it is encouraged to avoid those times.  For regularly scheduled observations, it is desirable that the distracted driving observations be conducted at the same locations and same times each month. However, it is understandable if agency priorities or inclement weather prevent this consistency.  **Sample Size/Locations**: A suggested count of 100 - 200 vehicles be collected for each observation conducted (each time an observation is conducted). These observations should be made at high, medium, or low traffic density areas, and represent urban, suburban, and rural settings, if possible. Stopped or slow-moving traffic locations are ideal, such as intersections, entrances to shopping centers or ramps off of highways and roads frequently used by local motorists.  **Observation Sites**: Personnel safety and the safety of the motoring public are paramount. Observers and data collectors need to be out of harm’s way of moving traffic (e.g., behind a guard rail, on a hill, on a sidewalk, etc.), yet be in an area that offers a clear view of a driver.  **Personnel:** Ideally, an observer and data collector are used to conduct the distracted driving observations and record the data, respectively. There might be traffic situations and locations where an observer would also have the time to record the data, therefore conduct the observation alone, however, this is not recommended.  **Clothing/Equipment**: Should an officer(s) conduct the observation, plainclothes are preferred with a safety vest. It is suggested that all vehicles be far removed from oncoming motorist views. (Observers should not be wearing law enforcement uniforms or have any police vehicles present near the observation post. There should not be any signs indicating a distracted driving survey is being conducted.) Dress according to weather and site conditions. Clipboards, pencils, and data collection forms need to be on hand, as well.  **Observation Data:** The following data should be collected:   * front seat driver only * gender (male, female) * age estimates – driver (<-24, 25-59, 60+), * type of vehicle (passenger car, pickup, SUV, and van).   Note - Do not collect data on commercial, emergency, or recreational vehicles.  **Observation Procedures:**  (Identify a mark (e.g. highway sign, signal pole, cross street, etc.) to use for identifying the vehicle you are observing. Make sure the mark is upstream enough to allow the time to see all the data elements (gender, age, etc.) you need to collect. Practice making observations and recording data to determine the best mark.)   1. Select vehicle crossing designated observation spot.   (Note- On a road with two or more traffic lanes, observe traffic in only one lane at a time. Split time between lanes. Choose the direction of traffic that represents the most community motorists, if possible.)   1. Make observation and relay information to data collector to record the cell phone use of driver. (“Y” for holding a cell phone to ear, near head, mouth, extended in front of driver, manipulation, observed looking down at the phone, and “N” for no visible phone in the driver’s hand. 2. Observe and record driver gender (“M” or “F”) and age estimates for driver (“1” <24, “2” 25-59, “3” 60+”). 3. Observe and record vehicle type (“C” Car, “T” Pickup Truck, “S” SUV, and “V” Van).   (Note – If any data element is missed or unknown leave that field on form blank.)   1. After data is recorded, look up and select the next vehicle that crosses the observation spot, and repeat observation and recording tasks (Steps 1 to 4).   (Note - Vehicles with tinted windows, going too fast, or any other reason for being unable to make an accurate observation, skip and move to the next targeted vehicle)  (An example of a partially filled out form is provided on the back of these instructions.)  **Forms:** Upon completion of observations, review forms, make sure there are not any illegible recordings and then enter into a spreadsheet for analysis.  **Contact**: If there are any questions, especially during data collection, please contact XXX at xxx-xxx-xxxx ext. xxx. |

***DISTRACTED DRIVING (CELL PHONE USE) OBSERVATION FORM***

***OBSERVER LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

***(Street and Cross Street or other landmark)***

***DATE:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF WEEK: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ WEATHER CONDITION:***

***1 Clear / Sunny 2 Cloudy***

***3 Clear But Wet***

***TRAFFIC DIRECTION (Circle one): N S E W***

***START TIME:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Observation period will last approx. 60-90 minutes) STATE LAW:***

***🞎 Cell phone ban***

***🞎 Texting ban***

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|  | ***Vehicle***  ***Type***  *C = Car*  *T = Pick Up*  *S = SUV*  *V = Van* | ***Driver***  ***Cell Phone***  ***Use***  *Y = Yes*  *N = No* | ***Sex***  *Male = M*  *Female = F* | ***Estimate***  ***of Age***  *< than 24*  *2=25-59*  *3=60+* |
| ***1*** |  |  |  |  |
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***Note – Cell phone use is defined as:***

* ***The driver holding a cell phone to the ear, near his/her face,***
* ***The driver talking into a cell phone while holding it,***
* ***The driver looking down at the phone on his/her lap or center console, or***
* ***The driver manipulating a cell phone in his/her hand.***

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*Optional - Observers Name, Organization/Agency*