



PRESS RELEASE

Sheriff Kicks off Billboard Campaign – Texts Cause Wrecks!

September 27, 2013 — Motorists along Highway 8 through Aloha are seeing billboards promoting Sheriff's Office safety messages. The billboards are provided as a generous donation by a local business, Total Outdoor. They are located at Highway 8 at 214th and 174th Avenues.

The first in a series of billboards, "Texts Cause Wrecks", reminds motorists that texting while driving is a leading cause of crashes. About 82% of young adult drivers (age 16-24) admit they have read a standard text message while driving, according to a national survey conducted by the Ad Council. For many of us, **responding to text alerts is a reflex**, so we need to remove the stimulus or find other ways to avoid the "instant answer" habit.

Distracted driving is the number one killer of American teens. Of all drivers younger than 20 who are involved in fatal crashes, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicates that 16 percent were reported to have been distracted while driving. The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute reports that **a texting driver is 23 times more likely to get into a crash** than a non-texting driver. Washington County Deputies believe the numbers to be much higher because the cause of crashes is not reliably reported.



Reading a single text message removes a driver's attention from the road for 3-6 seconds. After just 3 seconds at 30 to 55 mph, a vehicle will travel 131 to 241 feet (about the length of a football field). Those seconds are the difference between having time to brake and a potentially fatal collision. According to Peggy Conlon, president and CEO of the Ad Council, research has shown that **using a cell phone delays a driver's reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration of .08 percent.**

Through our Texts Cause Wrecks campaign, the Sheriff's Office offers tips to help drivers avoid the temptation to text while driving. One concept is easy to remember. For over 25 years, law enforcement has successfully addressed drunk driving prevention by encouraging "designated drivers", and the latest research shows that 67 percent of all adults have tried to stop someone from drinking and driving. The same concept can be adapted to **using "designated texters"**, which suggests having a passenger text messages for a driver. Other ideas include turning your phone off when you turn the key, and storing your phone in the back of your vehicle to **remove the temptation or reflex** to instantly respond.

The goal of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, through these billboards and other efforts, is to educate and then remind drivers that Texts Cause Wrecks. Ultimately, we hope to save lives. Everyone, whether parents, friends, teachers or coworkers, can influence this social issue. It can be as easy as asking "**What are your best tricks for stopping yourself from texting while driving?**" Your Sheriff's Office asks you to change your habits and then **share what works.**