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**New Traffic Safety Campaign Shows Importance of Keeping Eyes on the Road**

**OLYMPIA** - The Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) is launching a new campaign during Distracted Driving Awareness Month this April. The campaign features a 30-second video that demonstrates how much the road can change in a short amount of time and reminds drivers to keep their focus on driving.

According to studies, it takes an average of five seconds to read a text message. In that short time, a car traveling at city speeds can cover approximately 220 feet, the length of three-quarters of a football field.

“Unfortunately, drivers who get away with using their phone while driving are more likely to do it again. We don’t want the consequences to be tragic when their luck runs out.” said Mark McKechnie, External Relations Director at WTSC. “In 2023, 136 traffic fatalities in Washington involved a distracted driver. People tend to underestimate these kinds of risks, so the new campaign illustrates just how much can change on the road in the blink of an eye.”

The campaign encourages drivers to take proactive steps to reduce distractions, such as placing their phones out of reach before driving. Additionally, law enforcement agencies across the state will be deploying extra emphasis patrols looking for distracted drivers from April 7-14.

“Operating a vehicle is one of the most dangerous activities we regularly do,” said Chief John Batiste of the Washington State Patrol.  “Because it is a daily task for most people, we forget how truly dangerous it is.  As a result, we find ourselves easily distracted with cell phones and other electronics in the vehicle until tragedy strikes.  So, I’m asking everyone, please be mindful of the task at hand when operating a vehicle, and let's work together to make this state a safer place to live.”

Distracted driving is a violation of Washington’s Driving Under the Influence of Electronics (E-DUI) law, which states drivers may not hold cell phones or watch videos while they are driving, stopped in traffic, or at a stop light. Hands-free use is limited to a single touch of the device. The first violation results in an E-DUI ticket that costs drivers $136. If the driver receives a second ticket within five years, the fine increases to $234.

Distraction is not just limited to electronics. Eating, drinking, and personal grooming also take drivers’ attention away from the road and other road users.

To view the campaign video and for more information about how to stay focused on the road, visit <https://togetherwegetthere.com/distracted-driving>.

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