

Plenty of Charges Laid in Distracted Driving Campaign

Written by OPP Release
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OPP officers across the province charged 2454 drivers with distraction-related offences from February 13 to 19, 2012.

That's 350 violations each day.

"We'd prefer the number of drivers charged each day was zero," says Deputy Commissioner Larry Beechey, Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support. "Although we have indeed had some success with our campaign, this is a clear indication that we have a great deal of work to do yet."

In the first seven weeks of 2012, nine deaths on OPP patrolled roads are attributed to an inattentive driver. That's more than alcohol and speed combined.

Chief Superintendent Don Bell, Commander of the Highway Safety Division said, "Our efforts to reduce fatal collisions are not limited to specific campaign dates. Our strict enforcement of distraction laws are a priority every day. These deaths are completely preventable and we'll continue to encourage voluntary compliance for the right reasons."

Under the Highway Traffic Act of Ontario, using a cell phone or device capable of texting while driving can result in a fine of \$155. Also, watching an entertainment device can result in a fine of \$110. Other forms of distracted driving can result in a charge of Careless Driving with fines ranging from \$400 to \$2,000, a possible licence suspension of up to two years and/or a jail term of not more than six months.

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Nearly 12 months ago the OPP added distracted driving to their list of top contributing factors in fatal collisions. "The big 4". (the remaining three components of "the big four" are impaired driving, aggressive driving and non-compliance with occupant restraint laws)

Using the lessons learned from a study in the U.S. related to distraction enforcement, the OPP implemented a comprehensive awareness and enforcement campaign called "Phone in One Hand, Ticket in the Other".

Campaigns were launched last May, July, September of 2011 and finally, last week. Each campaign included a week of awareness information through the media followed by a week of focused enforcement.

The number of distraction related offences initiated by OPP officers increased 110 percent compared to the year previous. The number of fatal collisions caused by an inattentive driver decreased by 25 percent.

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