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## **DHSMV REMINDS MOTORISTS TO FOCUS ON DRIVING, FLORIDA**

*~April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month~*

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Throughout the month of April, the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) is reminding motorists to fully focus on driving and not drive distracted. DHSMV is partnering with the Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Sheriffs Association, Florida Police Chiefs Association, Florida SADD and the Florida Teen Safe Driving Coalition to commemorate April 2016 as Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

“Operating a motor vehicle is a tremendous responsibility which requires a driver’s full attention,” said DHSMV Executive Director Terry L. Rhodes. “The department is reminding drivers of all ages to keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes on the road and your mind on driving.”

In 2015, there were more than 45,700 distracted driving crashes in Florida resulting in more than 39,000 injuries and more than 200 fatalities. Distracted driving crashes accounted for 12.2 percent of all crashes in Florida last year, 7.4 percent of fatal crashes and 15.4 percent of all injury crashes. The Florida Highway Patrol worked approximately 43 percent of distracted driving crashes statewide.

“Distracted driving is extremely risky behavior that not only puts drivers and passengers in danger, but others out on the road as well,” said Colonel Gene Spaulding, Director of the Florida Highway Patrol. “Focused attention on driving increases your reaction time to dangerous driving situations, helps to prevent crashes overall and saves lives.”

The three categories of driver distractions are visual (taking your eyes off the road), manual (taking your hands off the wheel) and cognitive (thinking about anything other than driving). Texting requires all three categories, making it one of the most dangerous distracted driving behaviors. However, texting is not the only driver distraction. Distractions can include talking on a cell phone, putting on makeup, reaching to comfort a child in the back seat, eating, tuning the radio, checking a GPS navigation device or even daydreaming.

Almost 20,000 drivers under 30 were involved in a crash in 2015 in Florida from driving distracted. The age group with the largest number of distracted driving crashes was 20–24 year-olds (17.8 percent), followed by 25–29 year-olds (14.3 percent) and then 15–19 year-olds (11.6 percent). Parents should talk with their kids about responsible driving behaviors and always model focused driving.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Secretary Jim Boxold said, “Safety is FDOT’s number one priority. We encourage motorists to pay attention to the road and avoid distractions, such as texting, eating or

interacting with other passengers that may draw your eyes and attention away. Pedestrians should also be alert and avoid walking while texting.”

“The Florida Sheriffs Association recognizes the danger involved with distracted driving,” said Sheriff Sadie Darnell, President of the Florida Sheriffs Association. “On behalf of all 66 elected Florida Sheriffs, we fully support Florida’s ban on texting while driving law and endorse the efforts of the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles with their ‘Focus on Driving, Florida’ campaign.”

"Distracted driving is deadly, and we must do everything possible to educate people about the risks involved," said Winter Park Police Chief Brett Railey, President of the Florida Police Chiefs Association. "Our lives are full of distractions, but there is no text message, no conversation, no interruption that is worth a life."

“Car crashes continue to be the number one cause of death for our teens and together we can stop this crisis,” said Danielle Branciforte, State Coordinator for Florida SADD and the Florida Teen Safe Driving Coalition. “As drivers and as passengers, it's our responsibility to stay focused on the task of driving by avoiding all distractions.”

Visit DHSMV’s website [here](#) to find out more about the department’s safety campaign and use the hashtag #FocusonDrivingFL throughout the month to share important distracted driving safety information.

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[The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles](#) provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol. To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered, visit [www.flhsmv.gov](http://www.flhsmv.gov), follow us on Twitter @[FLHSMV](#) or find us on [Facebook](#). For safe driving tips and techniques, download the official [Florida Driver License Handbook](#).

