

Texting while driving: it can wait

In today's busy world, it is common to feel like we should be multi-tasking in every moment. Even when we are behind the wheel of a vehicle, it can be difficult to give our full attention to the task at hand. The Alberta RCMP remind drivers that any task that feels urgent when driving, aside from the task of driving itself, can and should wait.

Distracted driving can have severe consequences and it is never worth the risk. A driver must already pay attention to a variety of items: traffic signals, other motorists, passengers, and road conditions. Adding a cell phone to the mix is never a good idea. According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a driver is eight times more likely to get into a motor vehicle accident when texting. They are four times more likely when talking on their phone, even when using a hands free device.

"The consequences of distracted driving can be devastating. It might seem like you have an urgent reason to divert your attention from the roads but, in reality, whatever it is should wait until you can pull over or stop in a safe location. There is nothing more important than ensuring the safety of yourself, your passengers and others on the roads," says Superintendent Gary Graham, Officer-in-Charge, Alberta RCMP Traffic Services.

In 2017, Integrated Traffic Units issued, 7,611 distracted driving tickets in Alberta RCMP jurisdictions. This number has been steadily increasing since 2012, with the exception of 2016. So far in 2018, 147 distracted driving charges have already been issued.

Below are some safety tips to prevent distracted driving:

- Put your phone away. Use your cellphone only when your vehicle is parked in a safe place.
- Pull over. If you need to attend to kids or pets in the vehicle, find a safe spot to park before doing so.
- Set the temperature, mp3 players, radio, CD player or the GPS unit prior to leaving. You should make adjustments only when the vehicle is stopped.
- Make sure children are comfortable and properly buckled up before leaving. Prepare safe activities for the trip so they don't get restless.
- Know the itinerary before leaving. Do not attempt to read a map while driving.
- Finish grooming at home. Do not comb your hair, shave or apply make-up while driving.

- Do not read while driving. Put newspapers and other reading materials out of sight and out of reach so you won't be tempted.
- Ensure that there are no items in the vehicle that will slide around or tip over while the vehicle is in motion.

“Traffic safety is a shared responsibility. A lot of that responsibility belongs to drivers themselves, but some of it belongs to passengers as well. As a passenger, you can help the driver by ensuring you’re not being a distraction. It is by working together to prevent distracted driving, that we will make the roads safer for everyone,” says Superintendent Rick Gardner, Alberta Sheriffs.

Alberta RCMP Traffic Services work with Alberta Traffic Sheriffs in Integrated Traffic Units (ITUs) to deliver effective and efficient traffic safety services to Albertans, with a focus on identified enforcement priorities.

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