



*****For Immediate Release*****

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September 20, 2018

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Washington State Patrol Focuses on Distracted Driving

Olympia – Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers will conduct a statewide emphasis on distracted driving from Friday, September 21 through Sunday, September 23, 2018.

According to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, distracted driving is the cause of 30% of traffic fatalities and makes up 23% of all serious injury collisions in the state. So far in 2018, the WSP has contacted 18,557 drivers for distracted driving. In 2017 alone, troopers stopped 17,058 drivers.

According to RCW 46.61.672, drivers are prohibited from using a personal electronic device while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway— which includes when stopped in traffic or at a traffic light. Personal electronic devices aren't just limited to cell phones, but also includes laptop, tablets, gaming devices, etc. A driver is only allowed the minimal use of a finger to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function on the device. However, drivers are allowed to use their phones if:

- It's hands-free and can be started by using a single touch or swipe of a finger
- You are parked or stopped out of the flow of traffic and safely off the roadway
- Calling 911

The penalty for distracted driving is a \$136 citation for the first offense. If you're issued another citation within five years, the penalty raises to at least \$234. Additionally, each offense is reported to your insurance companies.

Drivers can also get penalized for a secondary violation of dangerously distracted under RCW 46.61.673. Drivers can receive an additional \$99 penalty for being dangerously distracted if a driver commits a traffic violation because they were distracted.

The WSP would like to remind all drivers that there is no call, text, or update that is worth a life. Let's all work together to keep Washington roads safe by paying attention.

Please contact your local PIO for media questions and ride-alongs. For all Spanish media requests, please contact Trooper Chris Thorson at 509-731-8964.

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