



18 East 22nd St.  
Kearney, NE 68848-1180  
(308) 233-3214  
[www.cityofkearney.org](http://www.cityofkearney.org)

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## **CITY OF KEARNEY** **PRESS RELEASE** ***For Immediate Release***

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Point of Contact: Kevin Thompson, Police Lieutenant, (308) 233-5259

### **U Drive U Text U Pay Campaign**

Kearney Police Department will join law enforcement agencies nationwide April 8-12, 2021, to remind drivers about the dangers and consequences of texting and distracted driving. This annual campaign is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* high-visibility enforcement effort.

According to NHTSA, between 2012 and 2019, 26,004 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. While fatalities from motor-vehicle crashes decreased slightly from 2018, distraction-related fatalities increased by 10%. NHTSA also reported that the number of deaths linked to driver distraction was 3,142 nationwide, or almost 9% of all fatalities in 2019. This represents a 10% increase over the year 2018, or 284 more fatalities. The distraction figure was the largest increase in causes of traffic deaths reported for 2019.

Millennials and Gen Z are the most distracted drivers, often using their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA research from 2017, young drivers 16 to 24 years old have been observed using handheld electronic devices while driving at higher rates than older drivers since 2007. In 2019, 9% of people killed in teen (15-19) driving crashes died when the teen drivers were distracted at the time of the crash.

"Enforcement campaigns such as this aim to change behavior," said Chief Bryan D. Waugh. "Texting, messaging, and other forms of distracted driving are increasing habits that put everyone at risk, even those of us in law enforcement. We want drivers to focus on the most important task: hands on the wheel and eyes on the road."

Kearney Police Department and NHTSA urge drivers to put their phones away when behind the wheel. If you need to text, pull over and do not drive while doing so. If you are the driver, follow these steps for a safe driving experience:

- If you are expecting a text message or need to send one, pull over and park your car in a safe location. Once you are safely off the road and parked, it is safe to text.
- Ask your passenger to be your "designated texter." Allow them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
- Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving.

- Cell phone use is habit-forming. Struggling to not text and drive? Activate your phone's "Do Not Disturb" feature, or put your phone in the trunk, glove box, or back seat of your vehicle until you arrive at your destination.

Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. No text or post is worth ruining someone's day — or taking a life. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* For more information, visit [www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving](http://www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/distracted-driving).

Check out our web site at [www.cityofkearney.org](http://www.cityofkearney.org).

*We are sending this News Release as a service to the news media and citizens of Kearney.*

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