



Community Crime Prevention Newsletter

Plymouth, MN

Volume 2010 Number 1

Distracted Driving

People spend a lot of time in their cars: commuting to work, running to the store, driving to school, taking the kids to activities, and many other reasons. Drivers often forget how mentally and physically complicated driving really is. A vehicle is a heavy machine in which drivers must respond and react to other drivers, traffic signals, congestion, changes in weather and road conditions, and other obstacles. In addition, drivers must continually calculate speeds and distances, look out for pedestrians and bikers, and try to be prepared for the unexpected. Anything that takes attention off the task of driving, even for a few seconds, can be enough to cause a crash. In 2008, there were 79,095 traffic crashes in Minnesota. 455 people were killed and another 33,379 were injured. Not surprisingly, driver inattention is the leading cause of traffic crashes in Minnesota. Although there are many distractions: kids wanting attention, getting into a discussion with other passengers, changing the station on the radio, eating, and fiddling with GPS units, one of the biggest distractions for drivers are cell phones. In Minnesota, it is estimated that there are 14,000 people driving and talking on cell phones at any given time. Have you ever experienced driving and talking on your cell phone and arriving at your destination, totally forgetting the drive there? Often times, phone conversations absorb the driver's attention, taking their mind off driving.

When attention is taken off the task of driving, drivers are less able to react to or recognize any changes around them. Moreover, while talking on a cell phone and driving is dangerous, texting while driving is even more so. In 2008, a law was passed making it illegal for anyone to use any wireless communications device while driving. When you text, you not only take your mind off the task of driving, but you take your eyes off the road as well. We all know that we should pay attention when driving, but we often forget about how many distractions we face and how much these distractions affect our driving. Distracted driving puts everyone in danger. So, next time you get behind the wheel, put your cell phone down, know where you are going, keep conversations to a minimum, and keep your attention on the road.

🔔 **Extra, extra, extra!** Car break-ins are still very common. *Do not leave valuables in plain view in your car!* Commonly stolen items: GPS units, cell phones, purses, wallets, bags, laptops, and electronics. If you need to leave valuables in your car, lock them in the trunk before leave home!

Northern Star Juvenile Diversion Program (www.juvenilediversion.org)

Are you concerned about your son or daughter shoplifting, getting into fights, using drugs or alcohol, hanging out with the wrong crowd, or just drifting further away? The Northern Star Juvenile Diversion Program can help educate, motivate, and support youth and families of kids, aged 13-17, who are on the verge of going down the wrong path. The program provides 5 weeks of classes and community service opportunities to get youth back on the right track. To see if this program is right for your family, call 763-231-7242.

Minnesota State Statutes

Texting Restrictions for Everyone: No person may operate a motor vehicle while using a wireless communications device to compose, read, or send an electronic message, when the vehicle is in motion or is a part of traffic.

Teen Driving Restrictions:

Cell Phones: It is illegal for drivers under the age of 18 to use a cell phone, except in an emergency.

Passenger Limitations*: During the first 6 months of licensure, only one passenger under the age of 20 is permitted and during the second 6 months, no more than 3 passengers under the age of 20 are permitted. (* *Exceptions: if a parent is with the teen or the passengers are immediate family members.*)

Crime Free Multi-Housing Corner: “Smoke Free” Communities

Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in Minnesota. In 2008, there were 50 smoking-related fires in multi-family housing. Although Minnesota Freedom to Breathe provisions prohibit smoking in *indoor common areas*, such as rental offices, party rooms, indoor pools, entrances, and laundry rooms, it does not address smoking *within residential units*. However, managers may get complaints from non-smokers about second-hand smoke drifting into their apartment from neighboring units, especially if a non-smoker has a medical condition affected by smoke. In addition, managers may be concerned about increased cleaning costs and fire risk caused by smoking. There is an option: apartments can go “smoke-free.” An apartment community can choose to have one or all of their buildings smoke-free. The process is easy to implement. For more information about going “smoke-free”, contact Live Smoke Free at 651-646-3005 or go to www.mnsmokefreehousing.org.

Especially for Business Business Premise Security Survey

Burglary is always a concern for businesses. A burglary can impact your business in a variety of ways: financial costs of clean-up, repair, missing inventory, even stolen personal or confidential data. On average, a typical burglary costs a business approximately \$5,000. Although it is impossible to prevent all crime, there are ways to help reduce the opportunity for a burglary to occur. If you are wondering if there are ways to make your business safer, Plymouth does offer free premise security surveys. A Plymouth Police Officer will come out to your business, meet with you to discuss your safety concerns and security needs, and give you crime prevention recommendations customized to *your* business. Call 763-509-5147 to schedule an appointment.

Don't own a business? The Plymouth Police Department also offers security surveys for homeowners, too!

Distraction Theft
When shopping, keep your purse closed and don't put it in the basket of your shopping cart. It is common for criminals to distract you so they can steal your purse or wallet.

Fraud Stop: Census Scams

The US Census Bureau takes a detailed census every ten years to get a count of every person living in the United States. The 2010 census begins soon. Mainly, data is collected by forms mailed out by the Census Bureau, but some information is collected in person. Americans are legally obligated to report personal data for every person living at an address. Because of this, scammers are already trying to take advantage. Be on the look-out for census scams. **The census does not collect data via email or the Internet.** Moreover, the Census Bureau **does not** ask for your *social security number, bank account or credit card numbers*, and will **not** ask you for money or claim you owe money. In addition, census workers will have credentials, if they stop by your home. For more information about the 2010 census, contact the US Census Bureau at www.census.gov.

Featured Safety Program: **Night to Unite!**

Every year, the first Tuesday in August is a chance for neighbors to come together, get to know each other, and give crime a going away party! This year, Night to Unite! will be held on August 3rd. To get on the mailing list for Night to Unite! or for more information on how to host a Night to Unite! block party, call Sara Cwayna at 763-509-5198. Registration materials will be sent out in April. In addition, everyone is invited to our Night to Unite! Kick Off event. The event will be on August 3rd from 2:30 to 5:00 PM at Plymouth Fire Station III (3300 Dunkirk Lane). We hope to see you there!



Emergency: **9-1-1** Non-emergency: **763-525-6210** Crime Tip Line: **763-509-5177**

If you have any comments about this newsletter, please contact Officer Angela Haseman at the Plymouth Police Department, 3400 Plymouth Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55447, 763-509-5147 or at ahaseman@plymouthmn.gov. Thank you!