



## WESTPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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### **Put Your Phone Away or Get Ready to Pay.** *Law Enforcement to Stop Distracted Drivers with U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

(Westport, CT) From April 4 to April 30, 2017, The Westport Police Department will be out in force looking for distracted drivers as part of the *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* campaign, a high-visibility effort to enforce distracted-driving laws.

“Everyone knows texting and driving is illegal and dangerous, and everyone knows they shouldn’t be doing it—but we see it happen all the time,” said Deputy Chief Sam Arciola. “Beginning April 4th, you will see stepped-up law enforcement efforts. Officers will be stopping and ticketing anyone who is caught texting and driving. If you text and drive, you will pay.”

Too many drivers are ignoring their responsibilities behind the wheel, and distracted driving is a growing and deadly threat on our roadways. The Westport Police Department is teaming up with the Connecticut Department of Transportation during the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA’s) National Distracted Driving Awareness month to make sure all motorists keep their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel.

Violating Connecticut’s distracted driving laws can be costly. Drivers who are ticketed for this violation can be fined **\$150** for a first offense, **\$300** for a second offense and **\$500** for third and subsequent offenses.

According to the NHTSA, 3,477 people were killed and an estimated 391,000 injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers in 2015. This is a 9-percent increase in fatalities as compared to the previous year.

An analysis by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety of 2009-2012 data found that while more



than 80 percent of drivers believed it was completely unacceptable for a motorist to text behind the wheel, more than a third of those same drivers admitted to reading text messages while operating a passenger motor vehicle themselves.

“Do the right thing—put your phone away when you get behind the wheel. Save yourself the embarrassment and expense of getting pulled over—or more importantly, maybe save someone’s life.” said Deputy Chief Sam Arciola.

Westport and the Connecticut Department of Transportation urge you to put your phone down when you get behind the wheel. If you need to text, pull over and park your vehicle in a safe place first.

Remind your family and friends to never text and drive:

- Texting and driving is more than just personally risky. When you text and drive, you are a danger to everyone around you.
- No one likes to be criticized by a friend for doing something wrong, but it’s even worse to get caught by law enforcement and have to pay a fine.
- Don’t follow the pack, be a leader. When you get behind the wheel, be an example to your family and friends by putting your phone away.
- Speak up. If your friends are texting while driving, tell them to stop. Listen to your passengers; if they catch you texting while driving and tell you to put your phone away, put it down.

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**Lieutenant David Farrell**

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