

Half of weekend fatal crashes attributed to distracted driving

Driver distraction was a factor in two of the four fatal motor vehicle collisions the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) investigated over the Labour Day Long Weekend, pushing the number of 2014 distraction-related roads deaths up to 39 (in OPP jurisdiction). The drivers lost their lives over the same weekend that the OPP deployed its 10 re-purposed distracted driving enforcement sports utility vehicles across the province. While the vehicles will be enforcing Ontario's distracted driving legislation full-time, these latest road tragedies reinforce the need for drivers, passengers and all other road users to become part of the solution.

If you are a driver, always pay full attention to driving and make a full-time habit of turning off your electronic hand-held device until you pull over or reach your destination. If you are a passenger being driven by someone who is talking on their cell phone, texting or distracted in some other way, firmly ask that they stop this dangerous behaviour and tell them that you do not feel safe, even if they erroneously try to reassure you that they are able to drive safely while distracted.

As of the end of the Labour Day Weekend, the OPP has laid more than 11,500 Highway Traffic Act 78.1 Prohibit Hand-held Devices charges in Ontario so far this year.

Our officers are working as hard as ever to eliminate the senseless deaths that occur because of distracted driving but more needs to be done and we are asking the public to get on board. People have the ability to help positively influence the behaviour change that is needed on the part of those drivers who still feel that they can safely drive while distracted. Help make distracted driving socially unacceptable by spreading the word to family, friends, co-workers and school mates that there is no such thing as a safe distracted driver - distracted driving kills, said Chief Superintendent Chuck Cox, Commander, OPP Highway Safety Division.

The OPP would like to thank the many Ontario residents and visitors who did their part to ensure that they and their families made it through a safe long weekend on roads, waterways and trails.