

Distracted driver the #1 killer on Ontario roadways

Irresponsible driver behaviour has the OPP concerned about the fate of many road users this year as officers prepare to launch their next campaign against Distracted Driving.

In 2013, distracted driving fatalities surpassed both impaired and speed related fatalities in fatal motor vehicle collisions investigated by the OPP. A total of 78 persons died in distracted driving related collisions compared to 57 impaired driving deaths and 44 speed related deaths last year.

“When you consider the overall impact of these 78 fatalities last year and the 325 other distracted driving victims who have died since 2010, the number of people these irresponsible drivers have had a profound and devastating impact on is in the thousands,” said OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support.

“Everyone, from the victims' families and friends to the police officers who attend these horrific collision scenes and have to notify next-of-kin, knows the emotional impact of one life lost to this senseless driving behavior trickles down to so many people who, sadly, through experience, know how badly this behaviour needs to stop,” he added.

The OPP recognizes that the only way to stop people from dying in distracted driving related collisions is to raise awareness of how serious the problem is and to have everyone make a firm, lifelong commitment to helping the police and safety partners eliminate it altogether. According to the OPP, it can be done.

“Over and above every driver pledging to never text or talk on the phone, pledge to be a good passenger and speak up if the driver in your car is using his/her phone or engaged in other forms of distraction. Pledge to regularly encourage your friends and family to not be distracted while driving,” said OPP Chief Superintendent Don Bell, Commander of the Highway Safety Division. “Even though our campaign only runs one week, make this a year-round commitment because it is a fail proof way to help us eliminate the tragic deaths that occur every year because of distracted drivers,” added Bell.

The OPP is reminding motorists that on March 18, 2014 the current distracted driving fine of \$155 will jump to \$280 (this includes the increased \$225 fine plus a \$50 victim fine surcharge and \$5 court cost).

The OPP's Distracted Driving Campaign runs from Saturday, March 8 to Friday, March 14, 2014. During that time, the OPP will be doing its part to eliminate the threat of distracted driving through its own awareness raising efforts and focused enforcement of distracted driving laws throughout the province.

The OPP is asking Ontarians to show their support during this important campaign. Go to the OPP's Facebook and/or Twitter pages and let them know how you plan on helping to eliminate distracted driving on Ontario roads. The OPP will highlight some of your entries in a campaign wrap-up news release following the campaign.