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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 14, 2023**

### **Just Drive: April Marks Distracted Driving Awareness Month**

**MONTGOMERY** – The behavior of driving distracted continues to plague our state’s roadways by creating dangerous situations that can easily be avoided by using safe driving practices. In recognition of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency’s (ALEA) Highway Patrol Division is encouraging drivers and motorcyclists to steer clear of distractions and pay attention to the road.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) latest distracted driving report, in 2020, 3,142 people were killed and 324,652 people were injured in distraction-related motor vehicle crashes across the nation.

ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said, “Distracted driving is defined as an any activity that could divert a person’s attention away from the primary task of driving. It not only endangers the safety of the driver and passengers within a particular vehicle but also puts the lives of other motorists in harm’s way. While there are a number of activities that could divert a driver’s attention from the road, the most alarming distractive trend has become the use of cell phones and other smart devices while operating a vehicle.”

In Alabama, 1,844 crashes occurred as a result of distracted driving by use of a cell phone in 2020 and 1,972 crashes in 2019. Under current Alabama law, texting and driving in the state is illegal.

Director of ALEA’s Department of Public Safety Colonel Jon Archer said, “We give the analogy that if you look down at your phone to either read or send a text message for just 5 seconds, at 55 miles per hour you have already traveled the distance of a football field. You may not have the intention to hurt anyone, but if you are involved in a crash that causes injuries or fatalities due to distracted driving, you’re going to change that person’s life and their family’s life forever, as well as your own.”

While the use of cell phones and other smart devices has become one of the most prevalent distracted driving behaviors, there are a variety of other activities motorists need to be aware of. We strongly urge motorists to avoid the following while driving: eating or drinking, talking to passengers, self-grooming, applying makeup, using a navigation device and adjusting the radio or climate controls. These activities are just as dangerous and can create situations where distracted driving can lead to a crash.

ALEA offers the following distracted driving prevention tips:

### **For Drivers**

1. Put aside your electronic distractions. Do not use or reach for devices while driving. Putting phones on “do not disturb” mode can help remove the temptation to browse online at a red light or respond right away to a text message.
2. Avoid multitasking. Anything that occupies your mind or vision can be a distraction behind the wheel. Make time at home to eat meals or put on makeup, so you can focus on the road.
3. Plan your route before you go. Programming your navigation system while you drive can take your eyes off the road. It is better to ask a passenger to do it or to enter your destination before you leave home.
4. Be alert for pedestrians and cyclists, especially those who may themselves be distracted.

### **For Parents**

1. Set a good example for young drivers and talk with teen drivers about responsible driving.
2. Familiarize yourself with the state’s [Graduated Driver License Law](#) (GDL). That information can be found on ALEA’s website.
3. Keep kids and pets safe. Make sure kids are in proper car seats and that pets stay secured in their zone in the back of your vehicle. It can also help reduce distractions if pets are not roaming about the car.

### **For Passengers**

1. Speak up. If you see someone texting or otherwise driving while distracted, say something and let them know that you are not comfortable with that behavior. Encourage your children to do the same when they are passengers in a friend’s car. It could save a life.
2. Offer to make the call for the driver, so his or her full attention stays on the road.

Join ALEA and take the [pledge](#) to not drive distracted today!