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ALEA: ‘Save Room for Safety’ this Thanksgiving

ALEA’s Highway Patrol Division Focuses on the Dangers of Driving Distracted

MONTGOMERY – This holiday season, travel experts are predicting over 54 million Americans will travel at least 50 or more miles from home during the 2022 Thanksgiving holiday travel period. To continue the Agency’s holiday tradition of ensuring public safety, Troopers within the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency’s (ALEA) Highway Patrol Division have prepared once more for a high volume of traffic on Alabama’s roadways, with the national average expected to exceed travel numbers in 2021. Based upon these predictions and the increases recorded post-pandemic, emphasis has been placed on among the state’s busiest corridors and areas that have historically resulted in a higher number of crashes.

ALEA Secretary Hal Taylor said, “Fortunately, we have recorded an overall decrease in traffic related fatalities on Alabama’s roadways since 2019 when tragically 11 lives were lost during that busy Thanksgiving holiday travel period. We want to ensure this trend continues and we encourage everyone to ‘save room for safety’ this holiday season by preparing your vehicle before your trip, leaving in plenty of time and avoiding risky driving behaviors such as following too closely, speeding and distracted driving.”

“The holiday season should be marked with joy and happiness, a time for families and friends to rejoice and celebrate together, not a time to mourn the loss of a loved one. However, it is the tragic and senseless loss of life due to these careless and dangerous driving behaviors that motivate and drive me, as well as the employees within this Agency, to remain focused on our mission of safeguarding the lives of all individuals who travel upon Alabama roadways,” he continued.

This year, the official Thanksgiving Holiday travel period begins at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 23, and ends at midnight Sunday Nov. 27. The Agency fully recognizes and prepares for the many Alabamians that begin and complete their holiday travel outside these periods, which is why ALEA Troopers will be proactively patrolling the entire state before and after the busy Thanksgiving holiday.

“Our Troopers in the Highway Patrol Division have worked diligently to reduce crashes and traffic fatalities across the state through a variety of high-visibility enforcement details. We also continue to concentrate our efforts on educating the public relative to dangerous driving behaviors such as distracted driving,” said ALEA’s Director of the Department Public Safety (DPS) Colonel Jimmy Helms.

There are a variety of activities that can distract drivers such as eating or drinking, talking with passengers inside your vehicle, however, none are more alarming than texting while driving. Sending or reading a text message takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that is similar to driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

“You absolutely cannot drive a vehicle safely unless you are devoting your full attention to the operation and task at hand. If you engage in any activity outside of driving when you are behind the wheel you are

putting yourself and others at risk because you are increasing the chances of a crash occurring,” said Colonel Helms.

ALEA offers the following tips to avoid distracted driving:

1. **Use your cell phone for emergency situations only.** If you need to make a call or send a text, pull over safely to the right shoulder. Even hands-free devices can still cause you to miss important visual and audio cues needed to avoid a crash.
2. **Avoid long social conversations and do not scroll on social media or watch videos while driving.**
3. **If you are drowsy, pull off the road.** Drowsiness increases the risk of a crash by nearly four times. If you feel tired, get off the road; don't try to get home faster.
4. **Limit the number of passengers, as well as the level of activity inside the car.** Keep in mind the state's Graduated Driver License (GDL) Law. In Alabama, 16-year-old drivers may not have more than one non-family passenger in the car with them at any time. Driving with friends can create a dangerous driving environment because novice drivers are focused on their friends rather than the road. Learn more about the state's GDL Law [HERE](#).
5. **Avoid eating while driving.** Being busy is no excuse for distracted driving. Food spills are a major cause of distraction.
6. **Do your multi-tasking outside the car.** Everyone spends a lot of time in their vehicles, and it may seem like the perfect time to get little things done, however, those little tasks require attention away from the road and drivers around you.