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NEWS ADVISORY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MEDIA AVAILABILITY: UNMARKED SQUADS UNVEILED TO PROTECT MOTORISTS FROM DISTRACTED DRIVERS

The Minnesota State Patrol Stands with Frustrated Motorists Regarding Distracted Driving

WHAT: To save lives and protect motorists, the Minnesota State Patrol is adding five new unmarked squad cars to specifically target dangerous driving behaviors.

In 2014, driver inattention contributed to 61 deaths and more than 7,000 injuries on Minnesota roads. In the last three months, the Minnesota State Patrol has investigated at least two deadly crashes where driver distraction was suspected.

Troopers across the state understand the frustration of motorists who continue to watch others text, surf the web or participate in other distractions while driving.

Since the "texting and driving" law went into effect in 2008, the State Patrol has seen a dramatic increase in drivers stopped because of the behavior, from 180 in the first year of the law to 3,467 so far in 2015.

By using unmarked vehicles, motorists who text and drive will know troopers could be watching at any time, even if that driver doesn't see a marked State Patrol vehicle.

The troopers driving the unmarked vehicles will be assigned to Mankato, Marshall, the east and west Metro, and Brainerd.

WHEN: Monday, November 9, 11:00 a.m.

WHERE: Minnesota State Patrol West Metro District
2005 Lilac Dr. N. (Highway 100 & Duluth)
Golden Valley

WHO: Col. Matt Langer, Chief of the Minnesota State Patrol

WHY:

The Minnesota State Patrol is taking a proactive approach to stopping distracted driving after witnessing the number of distracted incidents grow.

- From 2012-2014 in Minnesota, distracted driving was a factor in one out of every four traffic crashes, resulting in an average of 60 deaths and 7,900 injuries per year.
- Over the last five years in Minnesota (2010-2014), 19 percent of all traffic fatalities and serious injuries were distraction-related.
- If you injure or kill someone because of texting and driving, you can face a felony charge of criminal vehicular operation or homicide.
- With Minnesota's "No Texting" law, it's illegal for drivers to read, send texts and emails, and access the web while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. That includes sitting at a stoplight or stop sign.
- Under the enhanced state texting law, drivers face a \$225 fine for second and subsequent violations of the texting while driving law, in addition to the current \$50 fine.

Editor's Note: A live stream of the media availability will appear on YouTube at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/Qw148xoEuTs>. Should our Internet connection fail, or you experience technical problems during the live event, you can access a recorded version posted to the [MnDPS YouTube channel](#) soon after the live stream.

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