



Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning  
P.O. Box 30634, Lansing, MI 48909  
517-284-3332  
Michigan.gov/ohsp

March 30, 2018

Contact: Kendall Wingrove  
517-284-3147

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***New video illustrates dangers of distracted driving*** **DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH TO PUT MOTORISTS ON ALERT**

With the start of Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning (OHSP) is releasing a new video to help remind motorists of the dangers of distracted driving. The video features Sam Howell and his family 13 years after the St. Charles, MI native was severely injured in a car crash.

"I remember reaching for my cell phone, which had fallen on the passenger floor and was ringing. I grabbed it, sat up, and was airborne off the road," he said.

Doctors gave Sam a three percent chance of surviving. "This is not only his nightmare but our nightmare," Sam's father, Jim Howell, said.

Sam was in a coma for more than two months but today he can walk unassisted. Sam's mother, Maureen Howell, added, "Nothing on your phone is worth that."

The video will help remind Michigan motorists that *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* during national Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April. It is available online at [www.michigan.gov/ohsp](http://www.michigan.gov/ohsp).

The OHSP is supporting distracted driving overtime traffic enforcement activity and distributing public information materials to nearly 200 law enforcement agencies receiving federal traffic safety funds. Statewide, officers will be stepping up overtime traffic enforcement April 9-22.

"When you are behind the wheel, keep your phone out of reach," said Michael L. Prince, OHSP director. "Studies show that texting while driving takes your attention off the road more than any other activity."

According to the Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center, there were 12,788 crashes in Michigan during 2016 involving distracted driving, resulting in 43 fatalities and 5,103 injuries. Cell phones were involved in 1,912 crashes, with 9 fatalities and 840 injuries.

To help encourage drivers to remain attentive to the task of driving, the OHSP has also distributed materials to every high school across the state, as teen drivers are especially vulnerable to distractions.

Michigan law prohibits a driver from reading, manually typing, or sending a text message while driving. Driving is defined as: operating a moving motor vehicle on a street or highway. Exceptions are in place for reporting crashes, crimes or other emergencies.

- \$100 fine for first offense, \$200 for subsequent offenses.
- No points are assessed on a driving record.

Michigan law prohibits Level 1 and Level 2 license holders under the Graduated Driver Licensing program from using a cell phone while driving.

- Violations are a civil infraction and fees up to \$240.
- No points are assessed on a driving record.

- 30 -

**N E W S R E L E A S E**  
**T R A F F I C S A F E T Y**