

COMMUNITY NEWS

Distracted driving causes many crashes

Q: There are way too many other drivers on their cell phones calling or texting. Why don't you enforce these laws? We never hear about it.

A: I agree that there are too many drivers that are distracted while driving. We are doing our best to enforce the laws and reduce the number of crashes on our roadways.

Minnesota does have a law making it illegal for drivers to read/compose/send text messages and emails, or access the internet using a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic.

I believe that distracted driving, namely texting and using the internet on our phones, is a major distraction that causes many crashes. I've based this belief not only on my years of training and experience from several traffic stops and crashes, but also on the statistics.

Each year in Minnesota distracted or inattentive driving is a factor in one in four crashes, resulting in at least 70 deaths and 350 serious injuries. I believe these numbers are vastly underreported due to law enforcement's challenge in determining distraction as a crash factor.

Driving itself is a challenging activity that involves steering, checking mirrors in traffic, signaling, maintaining safe speed, reading road signs, and more. Adding non-driving tasks behind the wheel increases the risk of a crash. Attentive driving is critical as the traffic environment can change in an instant, such as lights changing, vehicles braking quickly, changing lanes, road con-



Sgt. Neil DICKENSON
MINNESOTA STATE PATROL

ditions, and pedestrians crossing or walking along the roadways.

A recent in-depth study showed that the average person checking/or sending their phones for a text message takes their eyes off the roadway for approximately 4.6 seconds at a time. Now at 55 mph you have traveled over 370 feet in that time (well over the length of a football field.)

Ask yourself, what can happen in that time and distance? Could you drift over the shoulder and hit somebody changing their flat tire? You can have all the laws you want, but unless the motoring public obeys them, not much will change. We need to know the serious dangers of distracted driving and understand that texting and driving is unacceptable.

The Minnesota State Patrol and other law enforcement agencies have been, and will continue be actively involved in distracted driving campaigns throughout all of Minnesota.

If you have any questions concerning traffic related laws or issues in Minnesota send your questions to: Sgt. Neil Dickenson, Minnesota State Patrol, 1131 Mesaba Ave., Duluth, MN 55811. (Or reach me at neil.dickenson@state.mn.us).

CALENDAR

TODAY

- Retired Boise Cascade electricians, 9 a.m., Coffee Landing Cafe.
- Walk-ercise group, 10-11 a.m., Backus Community Center gymnasium.
- Littlefork Ambulance Thrift Shop open, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Northland Art Society open, various arts, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Backus, Room 114.
- Wednesday Study Group, 10:15 a.m., Faith United Church of Christ.
- East Koochiching Sanitary Sewer District Board, 11 a.m., Sanitary District Boardroom, 1412 Highway 71.
- Salvation Army Advisory Council, noon, Salvation Army building.
- Girl Guards, Sunbeams and Adventure Corps, 4:30-6 p.m., The Salvation Army.
- Free At Last, 4:30-6:30 p.m., Forestland Annex, lower level conference room.
- Northland Art Society open, various arts, 5:30-8 p.m., Backus, Room 114.
- International Falls Recreation Commission Board, 5:45 p.m., city council chambers.
- Northwood Shutterbug Photography Club, 6 p.m., International Falls Public Library.
- Narcotics Anonymous, 6 p.m., Alano Club.
- Men's Non-Violence Group, 6-8 p.m., Friends Against Abuse office.
- Members and guests Elks Lodge 1599 Wednesday Meal, 6:30 p.m., grilled ham, potato salad and baked beans.
- Little Lambs (3 years to kindergarten) and King's Kids (1st-5th grades), Youth Group (6th grade-up), 6:30-7:30 p.m., Full Gospel Fellowship Church.
- Rainy Lake Sportfishing Club, 7 p.m., Americlnn.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 7:30 p.m., Alano Club.

THURSDAY

- Bone Builders, 10-11:30 a.m., Woodland Apartments.
- Littlefork Ambulance Thrift Shop open, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
- Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf open, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 1000 Fifth St.
- Northland Art Society open, various

- arts, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Backus, Room 114.
- Storytime, 10:30 a.m., International Falls Public Library.
- Weight Watchers, 4:45-5:15 p.m. weigh-in; 5:15 meeting, Zion Lutheran Church.
- Community Café, free meals served, 5:30-6 p.m., deli turkey sandwich, hearty vegetable soup, fruit, Backus Community Center.
- Moose Burgers, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Moose Lodge.
- Beginner's Tae Kwon Do, 5:45 p.m., Falls Elementary School gymnasium or cafeteria.
- The Lamplighters, women's support group for survivors of childhood sexual abuse, 6-8 p.m., Friends Against Abuse office.
- Childbirth Classes, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Rainy Lake Medical Center.
- St. Thomas Bingo — Bonanza, 6:45 p.m.; Bingo, 7, Aquinas Hall.
- Line Dancing, 7 p.m.; pool, 7, Moose Lodge.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 7:30 p.m., Alano Club.

FRIDAY

- Walk-ercise group, 10-11 a.m., Backus Community Center gymnasium.
- Falls Hunger Coalition Food Shelf open, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., 1000 Fifth St.
- Serenity Sisters, Women's A.A., noon, Backus, Rational Alternatives, Room 101.
- Members and guests Elks Lodge 1599 Friday Light Meal, 5:30 p.m., Build-Your-Own Burgers.
- Narcotics Anonymous, 6 p.m., Alano Club.
- For Those in Need, Addiction Recovery, 7 p.m., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1340 Keenan Drive.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 7:30 p.m., Alano Club, 410 Fifth Ave.

SATURDAY

- Moose Lodge events — Open, noon; 1 p.m., Bingo; Roast Moose Supper, 6 (reservations, 283-3615); Karaoke Contest, 7.
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 7 p.m., Alano Club.

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BORDERLAND BRIEFS

ACT ON ALZHEIMER'S FORUM

The Greater International Falls ACT on Alzheimer's team welcomes the public to help vote on priority areas for action to help make a dementia friendly community. Hear about how surveys have identified five possible areas of action. The public is encouraged to add their voices at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday at Rainy River Community College Commons. Call Myrna Meadows at 286-5622 for more information.

THEATER PRODUCTION AUDITIONS

Borealis Bards will conduct auditions for a spring theater production, "This Is A Test," from 4 to 6 p.m. Monday and Tuesday at Backus Community Center, Room 201. Ages 8 to 18 are eligible to audition. Performances are March 15, 22 and 29. Call 502-693- 4858 for more information.

PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

Northwood Shutterbug Photography Club will meet at 6 p.m. today at International Falls Public Library. Participants are encouraged to attend with new cameras, equipment, etc., and members will assist with questions.

LOTTERY

Sunday's Daily 3 9, 4, 0	Saturday's Hot Lotto 4, 29, 39, 40, 43	Mega Ball 11
Sunday's Northstar Cash 4, 5, 10, 13, 22	Hot Ball 17	Saturday's Powerball 15, 16, 23, 27, 36
Friday's Gopher 5 19, 30, 33, 37, 38	Friday's Mega Millions 26, 32, 44, 45, 58	Powerball 9

POLICE REPORT

St. Louis County Sheriff's Office

Snowmobile crash: A snowmobile driven by Nicholas Kerzman, 41, Princeton, struck an obstruction protruding from the Ash River near the

Ash River Trail and Kabetogama causing his sled to roll over, said the report. Kerzman was taken by other snowmobilers to a nearby lodge where he was treated for a head injury after being knocked un-

conscious in the crash. He refused medical treatment. The incident remains under investigation, said the report. International Falls Ambulance Service and Kabetogama First Responders assisted.

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BEEN TOLD THERE IS NO HOPE?

You may have been told the there is no help available to deal with your or a loved one's hearing loss. The hearing aid technology that is currently available can help many people that could not get help in the past. It may be time to get a fresh look at what is now available to help you hear better.

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Thursdays, February 5, 12, 19 & 26

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