

Dept. of Transportation: New safety campaign highlights dangers of distracted driving

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The Wisconsin Department of Transportation reminds drivers of their most important role behind the wheel: to focus on safety on the road.

More than 10,000 crashes involve distracted driving every year in Wisconsin. Preliminary numbers show 40 people were killed and more than 2,700 were hurt in distracted driving crashes in 2022.

WisDOT's newest safety campaign aims to put a face to those statistics, featuring close call stories from the workers who are most at risk when a driver becomes distracted on the roads.

In a [new video advertisement](#), Wisconsin State Patrol Trooper David Yang shares his experience when his parked cruiser was side swiped by a semi on the interstate. The driver had briefly looked away from the road ahead.

"Trooper Yang was just inches from a serious injury or even death that day," Bureau of Transportation Safety and Technical Services Director David Pabst said. "We ask drivers to remember that Wisconsin's law enforcement officers, first responders, and maintenance workers are in danger every day they go to work. Safely operating a motor vehicle always requires a driver's full attention. Don't take the risk of looking away, even for just a second. It could be deadly."

State law prohibits the use of a handheld mobile device when driving through a construction zone and emergency or roadside response areas. Drivers with an instructional permit cannot use a phone at all and texting is banned for all drivers in

any location.

Anything that takes a driver's attention off the road is considered a distraction, including cell phones or other electronics, eating, and even passengers. All forms of distracted driving are dangerous and preventable.

The new ad series continues the mission of WisDOT's Buckle Up Phone Down campaign. It encourages every driver and passenger to take responsibility to stay safe on the roads by always putting the phone down behind the wheel and always wearing a seat belt. Learn more and [take the pledge online](#). The ad featuring Trooper Yang and a video highlighting a construction worker's perspective will begin airing later this month.

To avoid the risk of distracted driving:

- Find a place to park in a safe location if you need to send or read a text.
- Choose a passenger as the designated texter or navigator to get you to your location safely.
- Do not scroll through apps while driving. Put your phone out of reach if you're tempted to use it when behind the wheel.