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TxDOT's four goals: Maintain a safe system, address congestion, connect Texas communities, and be a Best-in-Class state agency

June 17, 2014

## **TxDOT HOSTS DISTRACTED DRIVING SUMMIT TO EDUCATE BUSINESS LEADERS ABOUT RISKS OF NOT HAVING EMPLOYEE SAFE-DRIVING POLICIES**

*As summit wraps up, TxDOT tours the state with crashed phone to raise awareness on the dangers of texting, talking while driving (Photos and video can be downloaded [here](#).)*

**AUSTIN** — Corporate executives, small business owners and state officials today joined the Texas Department of Transportation at Circuit of The Americas raceway to consider solutions for reducing driver distractions that caused more than 95,000 traffic crashes last year in Texas.

“With distracted driving responsible for 1 in every 5 crashes in Texas, we want to help business leaders understand what they can do to protect their employees, themselves and other motorists on the road,” said John Barton, TxDOT deputy executive director. “When employees crash on company time while using a mobile device, employers can be held liable for significant damages.”

Among the Distracted Driving Summit participants were national experts who recommended steps businesses can take to improve safety and reduce financial liability. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that employers in Texas spend \$4.3 billion every year as a result of on- and off-the-job traffic crashes that can result in medical claims, absences and lost productivity. An employer’s price tag for an on-the-job crash is about \$16,000 per vehicle; \$76,000 per injury; and \$505,000 per fatality. In recent years, numerous plaintiffs have filed and won multi-million-dollar lawsuits against employers when their employee caused injuries due to a distracted driving crash.

### **TxDOT Tours State with Crashed Phone**

In addition to raising awareness of the cost of distracted driving within the business sector, TxDOT also is educating the public on the dangers of such habits. As part of TxDOT’s “Talk, Text, Crash” campaign, the agency is hosting events across the state featuring a car-sized, 750-pound crashed phone as the backdrop for guest speakers who will offer insight about loved ones they’ve lost due to talking and texting while driving.

Researchers at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) say drivers who use a cell phone behind the wheel are four times more likely to get into a crash serious enough to cause injury. In addition, a study by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI) revealed almost half of Texas drivers have admitted using a cell phone while driving, and almost a quarter of

drivers say they sometimes or regularly send or read text messages while driving. Distracted driving-related crashes in Texas are highest among young adults ages 16 to 24, followed by adults over the age of 44. Last year in Texas, 505 people were killed and 19,981 people were seriously injured in distracted driving crashes.

The Distracted Driving Summit is part of TxDOT's "Talk, Text, Crash" campaign to warn motorists of the dangers of being distracted behind the wheel. While cell phone use is the most recognizable driving distraction, any behavior that takes a motorist's attention away from the road is dangerous. Distractions can include:

- Texting
- Checking email
- Eating and drinking
- Grooming
- Reading
- Programming a navigation system
- Adjusting a radio, CD player or other audio device

For media inquiries, contact TxDOT Media Relations at [MediaRelations@txdot.gov](mailto:MediaRelations@txdot.gov) or (512) 463-8700.

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*Information contained in this news release represents reportable data collected from Texas Peace Officer's Crash Reports (CR-3) received and processed by the Department as of June 3, 2014.*

**Texas Department of Transportation**

The Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining 80,000 miles of road and for supporting aviation, rail, and public transportation across the state. TxDOT and its 11,000 employees are committed to working with others to provide safe and reliable transportation solutions for Texas by maintaining a safe system, addressing congestion, connecting Texas communities, and being a Best in Class state agency. Find out more at [www.txdot.gov](http://www.txdot.gov). "Like" us on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/txdot](http://www.facebook.com/txdot) ; and follow us on Twitter, [www.twitter.com/txdot](http://www.twitter.com/txdot) .