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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

April 2, 2014

## **DISTRACTED DRIVING CRASHES ON THE RISE IN TEXAS**

*TxDOT launches Talk, Text, Crash campaign to coincide with April national awareness effort*

**AUSTIN** — As the number of crashes caused by distracted drivers continues to rise, the Texas Department of Transportation is urging motorists to put away their mobile devices and other distractions, and pay attention to the road. April marks National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and the kickoff of TxDOT's annual *Talk, Text, Crash* public education campaign.

"The statistics in Texas are sobering," said John Barton, TxDOT deputy executive director. "One in five traffic crashes in Texas is caused by a distracted driver, and last year 459 people were killed as a result. Those deaths were preventable. It's simple: We want drivers to focus 100 percent on driving when they're behind the wheel — for their sake and the sake of others."

Distracted driving-related crashes and fatalities in Texas are highest among young adults and adults over the age of 45. In 2013, the number of Texas crashes involving distracted driving totaled 94,943, up 4 percent from the previous year.

Drivers who use a cell phone when driving are four times more likely to get into a crash serious enough to cause injury. While distractions affect drivers of all ages, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has found that hand-held cell phone use is highest among 16- to 24-year-olds.

Text messaging is particularly dangerous. New research conducted last year by the Texas A&M Transportation Institute showed reaction times double when drivers are distracted by text messaging. Additionally, sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes away from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. At 55 mph, that's the equivalent of driving the length of a football field while blindfolded.

While cell phone use is the most recognizable driving distraction, any type of behavior that draws a motorist's attention away from driving is dangerous. Distractions can include:

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

The *Talk, Text, Crash* campaign warns motorists about the dangers of distractions and urges them to avoid multitasking or engaging in non-driving activities until they arrive at their destination.

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

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**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).