



# NEWS RELEASE

Christine M. Krueger, Director of Communications

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 4, 2008

**CONTACT:**

Nathan Bowie, 651-201-7571

## **IMPAIRED MOTORIST TOO BUSY TEXTING TO STOP FOR COP**

ST. PAUL — An impaired, speeding motorist arrested for DWI near Walker, Minn., early Sunday morning admitted to a Cass County sergeant that he was also texting during the officer’s pursuit.

The 25-year-old male motorist was traveling southbound in the northbound lane of Hwy. 371 and heading toward the squad of a Cass County Sheriff’s Office sergeant at 77 mph before he swerved back into the southbound lanes. The motorist continued to travel at speeds above 100 mph before stopping for law enforcement.

The driver told the sergeant he was driving in the wrong lane because he was texting.

The officer was working a NightCAP (nighttime concentrated alcohol patrol) enforcement effort.

The event happened just days after Minnesota’s new law prohibiting texting, emailing or accessing the Web behind the wheel went into effect. The violation can cost up to \$300 and applies to drivers of all ages. As a primary offense, law enforcement can stop a motorist if they observe a violation of the new law.

Specifically, the law states that no person may operate a motor vehicle while using a wireless communications device to compose, read, or send an electronic message, when the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic. The law does not apply to devices that are permanently affixed to the vehicle or global positioning systems or navigation systems.

According to the Department of Public Safety (DPS), crashes in which distraction or inattention was a factor — including text-messaging or cell phone use — are vastly underreported. The state reports distraction was a factor in at least 15 percent of all fatal crashes during 2005–2007, resulting in 240 traffic deaths. Another 1,163 motorists suffered serious, life-altering injuries as a result of distracted driving crashes during this period. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says distraction is a factor in about 25 percent of all crashes.

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- Office of Justice Programs
- Office of Traffic Safety
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