



MINNESOTA

TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

Nov. 14, 2016

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## **TZD puts safety messages on overhead electronic message signs**

*Message Monday focuses on creatively changing driver behaviors*

ST. PAUL, Minn. - The Minnesota departments of Transportation and Public Safety today launched a new Message Monday campaign using the state's electronic message signs to bring attention to safe driving.

The signs, located above freeways and other high-traffic roads, already are used to display messages related to road conditions, speed limits, construction and DPS enforcement efforts. Message Monday will relay safety messages each week to start conversations that could positively change the state's traffic culture.

"Since 2013, we have let motorists know that law enforcement was conducting extra enforcement for specific traffic behaviors, but now we are focusing on a second phase to change the culture around traffic safety in a more creative way," said Kristine Hernandez, statewide Toward Zero Deaths program coordinator.

Fatalities have not significantly reduced in the past five years, she said.

The crash data led Minnesota to model what Iowa and other states are doing to tell motorists about seat belt use and the risks of distracted driving, speeding and drunken and aggressive behaviors.

"A reduction in fatalities and serious injuries will only occur if we use new and innovative ways to educate motorists on traffic safety risks," said Jay Hietpas, MnDOT state traffic engineer and co-chair of the TZD leadership committee. "We believe the signs have potential to change driver behavior while they are driving."



A recent U.S. Department of Transportation report about the public's perception of safety messaging showed that between 45 percent and 68 percent of travelers indicated that safety-related messages had caused changes in their driving behavior.

Messages that could show up on the signs include "Driving drowsy could wreck the holidays," "Friends don't text friends who are driving," and "Turn signals – the original instant message." On Monday, the message was "Don't fumble your life away. Buckle up!"

The messages will focus on the emotional ties of traffic safety with an emphasis on positive messages that stimulate safe and acceptable rules of driving behavior. Creating a traffic safety culture to reduce fatalities and crashes is the mission of the Minnesota TZD program.

There are 180 dynamic message signs in the Twin Cities' Metro area and 100 in Greater Minnesota. About half of the signs in the Twin Cities will display Monday Messages during the off-peak hours on Mondays between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., and after 7 p.m. on roadways that have higher traffic. In other locations, the messages will be displayed between midnight and noon.

Traffic management messages will take priority over those about safety, Hietpas said.

MnDOT is an anchoring partner of the state's [TZD](#) traffic safety program. A primary vision of the TZD program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. TZD focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes – education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma response.

For more information on TZD go to [www.minnesotatzd.org](http://www.minnesotatzd.org).

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