



# Quick Notes

from the Idaho Office of Highway Safety

December 12, 2011

**Save the Date!**  
*2012 Highway Safety Summit  
May 7-8, Boise, Idaho*

Idaho Transportation Department - PO Box 7129 – Boise, ID 83707-1129  
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**2011 Fatalities on Idaho Roads = 157\***

## General Message from the Highway Safety Manager

Hi Highway Safety Partners:

Last Friday the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) informed our office that the national 2010 fatality count fell to 32,885, the lowest level since 1949. The record-breaking national decline in traffic fatalities occurred even as American drivers traveled nearly 46 billion more miles during the year or an increase of 1.6 percent over the 2009 level. This fact breaks the myth that fatalities are decreasing because Americans are driving less as a nation. In Idaho the trend is similar.

Also released last Friday is a new measure of fatalities related to distracted driving or “distraction-affected crashes.” This is a broader effort to refine data collection to get better information about the role of distraction in crashes and the new measure is designed to focus more narrowly on crashes in which a driver was most likely to have been distracted. While the national Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) previously recorded a broad range of potential distractions, such as careless driving and cell phone presents in the vehicle, the new measure focuses on distractions that are most likely to affect crash involvement, such as distraction by dialing a cellular phone or texting and distraction by an outside person/event. Idaho continues to be a leader in the nation in crash reporting and the inclusion of distracted driving elements were introduced last summer with the publication of version 4.0 of E-Impact, Idaho’s electronic crash reporting form. Regarding Idaho’s distracted driving elements found in the crash report, 2012 will be the first full year of data that is available for analysis.

A new national survey offers additional insights into how drivers behave when it comes to texting and cell phone use while behind the wheel and their perceptions of the safety risks of distracted driving. Survey respondents indicated they answer calls on most trips; they acknowledge few driving situations when they would not use the phone or text; and yet they feel unsafe when riding in vehicles in which the driver is texting and they support bans on texting and cell phone use. These findings provide further evidence that distracted driving is a complex problem that is both hard to measure and difficult to address given conflicting public attitudes and behaviors. Among the findings, more than three-quarters of drivers report that they are willing to answer calls on all, most, or some trips. Drivers also report that they rarely consider traffic situations when deciding when to use their phone. While most drivers said they are willing to answer a call and many will send a text while driving, almost all of these same drivers reported that they would feel very unsafe as a passenger if their driver was sending or receiving text messages. Over one-third report that they would feel very unsafe if their driver was using a handheld phone.

NHTSA’s adoption of the new “distraction-affected crash” measure for the 2010 FARS data is one step in a continuing effort to focus in on driver distraction and separate it from other issues. Idaho supports this effort. As part of its commitment to reduce the problem of distracted driving, Idaho will continue to look for improved data sources. While police reports of serious crashes are an important source, they are limited by the evidence available to the officer. As a result, work to optimize information from crash reports by improving reporting forms and officer training will be ongoing. In addition, NHTSA will analyze new data on driver distraction from a new naturalistic study in which about 2,000 cars will be fitted with cameras and other equipment that will record

driver behavior over a period of two years. Researchers will be able to use these data to associate driver behaviors with crash involvement.

As you can see much needs to be done in the area of distracted driving, but by all working together our goal to continue the downward trend *Toward Zero Deaths* can be realized.

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Highway Safety Manager  
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## **Study: Hands-free or Not, Cellphone Use While Driving is Dangerous**

Though drivers tend to think otherwise, there is no evidence that using a hands-free cellphone device behind the wheel is any safer, according to a report compiled for the Swedish government. [Check out the full article.](#)

## **Drivers more concerned about cell phone use in cars than speeding**

SAN JOSE, Calif. -- Mary Ann Lahann was inching past the Bay Bridge toll plaza when ... wham! She was rear-ended by a driver with her head down, texting away.

It's no surprise to the 51-year-old engineer from Carmichael that cell phone use and texting now rank as the biggest safety worry on our roads, according to a survey released Thursday by the state Office of Traffic Safety. Motorists consider phone use more dangerous than speeders, tailgaters or drunken drivers.

Those fretting about drivers using cell phones more than doubled from a year ago, to 39 percent, a "dramatic" increase, according to safety officials.

And though 55 percent claimed they didn't once hold a phone while driving in the past month, 46 percent say they have made driving mistakes while talking on cell phones, and 60 percent say they have been hit or nearly hit by other drivers who were talking or texting.

"The person behind me just flat-out didn't stop," Lahann said. "When I got out and went to her window, she was sitting there kind of stunned. She said, 'I was on my phone! I didn't see you.' Like that was an excuse!"

In 2010, 22 percent of drivers thought speeding and aggressive driving were the biggest problems, followed by cell phone talking and texting, which totaled 18 percent combined. In the latest survey, speeding and aggressive driving dropped to 18 percent. Drunken driving was next on the list, with 13 percent considering it the biggest danger on the roads.

"I would agree (cell phone use) is the No. 1 distraction," said California Highway Patrol Officer D.J. Sarabia of San Jose. "Oftentimes we see drivers weaving in and out of lanes or driving on the shoulders. We stop to investigate what we may think is a possible DUI driver only to find out it was someone talking on the phone, hands-free or not."

Added Alameda County Sheriff Tom Rodrigues: "I see drivers on their cell phones every day. It's as if the laws don't even exist. I write every one that I possibly can. With all of the innovative tools out there for hands-free use, I am at a loss as to why people don't use them."

The CHP has issued nearly 475,000 tickets to drivers violating the hands-free law since it went into effect in July 2008. Police estimate local departments have issued a similar number of tickets over that period.

The survey comes at a time federal officials have begun a campaign against distracted driving by targeting teens. This weekend a safety video dubbed "OMG" will begin playing during previews at some movie theaters and at gas stations with video screens at the pump in the Bay Area and nationwide.

The price of a ticket is about \$159. A bill to double that amount and apply the same law to bicyclists was vetoed by California Gov. Jerry Brown.

Data on how many crashes can be directly linked to cell phone use are inconclusive. Some studies say it's a huge problem, while others point to an overall decline in crashes and injuries and say concerns are overstated.

"Speeding, aggressive driving, drunk driving all are very serious and actually kill more people than cell phone use," said Chris Cochran, a spokesman for the traffic safety group. "But crashes from cell phone use are a fast-growing problem and one that the public is correct in noticing and, hopefully, reversing early."

One ray of encouraging news is that a larger percentage of drivers (40 percent) say they talk less on their phones while driving than last year (35 percent) because of the hands-free law.

Meanwhile, police say they are getting better at spotting cell phone abusers who try to hide phones in their hair or hoodie, let the phone drop to the floor or pretend they are scratching their face or playing with earrings.

Safety studies say a driver texting while going 55 mph can cover the length of a football field without looking at the road.

"What if a pedestrian steps into a crosswalk? What if a child runs across the street? What if the vehicle in front of you stops to avoid a hazard?" asked CHP Officer Sarah Jackson of Aptos. "The consequences are permanent."

Lahann says she can now spot a cell phone driver so easily.

"They cannot maintain a steady speed. Up to 70, down to 50, then up again," she said. "In the No. 1 lane on freeways."

And if being rear-ended wasn't enough, Lahann had another bad experience one day as she walked through the parking lot at a grocery store. Without warning, a teen texting while on his bicycle ran into her as he rode head down, no hands on the handlebars, texting like mad.

"I saw him at the last moment and jumped to the side," she said. "His front wheel swiped me. He wobbled and almost went down. No apology, just a swear word."

## **Alive at 25**

With the change in weather and the holiday season starting, the Meridian Police Department would like to invite young drivers, ages 15-24, to participate in the Alive at 25 program.

Alive at 25 is a free 4½ hour driver awareness course designed by the National Safety Council for young drivers ages 15-24 which includes:

- Defensive driving classroom curriculum to increase awareness and develop strategies for keeping safe on the road; and
- Decision-making and responsibility-taking by learning through interactive media, workbook exercises, role-playing, and class discussion.

The goal of the Alive at 25 program is to help young people be safe drivers. View more at [Alive at 25 CH.6 12/3/11](#)

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

*If you would like to add an event to the calendar, please send an e-mail with the event details to [lisa.losness@itd.idaho.gov](mailto:lisa.losness@itd.idaho.gov)*

Date	Event Description
Nov 29, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Kootenai County Fire Station #2, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Dec 16, 2011	Traffic Incident Management Workshop, ITD Headquarters E. Annex Conf. Rm., 3293 Jordan, St., Boise, ID, <a href="mailto:bryan.smith@itd.idaho.gov">bryan.smith@itd.idaho.gov</a> for more information
Dec 17, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Kootenai County Fire Station #2, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Dec 17, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Meridian Police Dept., <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Dec 17, 2011 – Jan 3, 2012	Impaired Driving, Statewide Traffic Enforcement Mobilization
Dec 19, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Boise Police Dept., <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Dec 30, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Nampa Civic Center, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Dec 30, 2011	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Middleton Fires Station, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Jan 4, 2012	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Kootenai County Fire Station #2, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Jan 14, 2012	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Rexburg City Hall, <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Jan 14, 2012	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Meridian Police Dept., <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Jan 28, 2012	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Meridian Police Dept., <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Feb 4, 2012	<b>Alive at 25</b> , Meridian Police Dept., <a href="http://www.idsafedriver.org">www.idsafedriver.org</a>
Feb 7 – 20, 2012	<b>Seat Belts</b> , Statewide Traffic Enforcement Mobilization
Mar 10 – 18, 2012	<b>Impaired Driving</b> , Statewide Traffic Enforcement Mobilization
Apr 19-30, 2012	<b>Aggressive Driving</b> , Statewide Traffic Enforcement Mobilization
May 7-8, 2012	<b>2012 Highway Safety Summit, Boise Centre on the Grove</b>
June 14-16, 2012	<b>Lifesavers Conference</b> , Orlando, Florida, <a href="http://www.lifesaversconference.org">www.lifesaversconference.org</a>
July 19-20, 2012	<b>Northwest Alcohol Conference</b> , Boise, Idaho <a href="http://www.northwestalcoholconference.org">www.northwestalcoholconference.org</a>

**WEBINAR "Safety and Operations of the Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (HAWK) and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)"**

Date: November 30, 2011, 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. EDT

Presenters: Kay Fitzpatrick (TTI), Richard Nassi (Pima Assn of Governments) & Ron Van Houten (Western Michigan Univ.)

Hosts: FHWA & PBIC

Cost: None

Details & registration: <http://bit.ly/tkeUoi>

**Quick Reference Guide** – click on the topic to go directly to website.

[OHS, Office of Highway Safety](#)

[ITD, Idaho Transportation Department](#)

[NHTSA, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#)

[FHWA, Federal Highway Administration](#)

[2010 Idaho Crash Report](#)

Program Area	Idaho State Links	Federal Links
Impaired Driving		<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Impaired">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Impaired</a>
Distracted Driving	<a href="http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/DistractedDriving.htm">http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/DistractedDriving.htm</a>	<a href="http://distraction.gov/">http://distraction.gov/</a>
Teen Drivers	<a href="http://www.idahoteendiving.org/">http://www.idahoteendiving.org/</a>	<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers</a>
Bike & Pedestrian Safety	<a href="http://www.itd.idaho.gov/bike_ped/index_new2.htm">http://www.itd.idaho.gov/bike_ped/index_new2.htm</a>	<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Pedestrians">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Pedestrians</a> <a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Bicycles</a>
Seat Belt Safety	<a href="http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/ClickIt/ClickIt2.htm">http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/ClickIt/ClickIt2.htm</a>	<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Occupant+Protection">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Occupant+Protection</a>
Child Passenger Safety	<a href="http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/ChildSafety/index.html">http://www.itd.idaho.gov/ohs/ChildSafety/index.html</a>	<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS</a>
Aggressive Driving		<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Aggressive">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Aggressive</a>
Motorcycles		<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/Motorcycles">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/Motorcycles</a>
Senior Driving		<a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov/Senior-Drivers">http://www.nhtsa.gov/Senior-Drivers</a>