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For Immediate Release

Kentucky steers motorists to buckle up, put phones down to increase roadway safety

Awareness and enforcement campaign runs through Oct. 12

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Oct. 6, 2020) – The Kentucky Office of Highway Safety (KOHS) is partnering with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to drive home a safety message to motorists aimed at preventing crashes by encouraging two life-saving actions behind the wheel – buckling up and putting the phone down.

Kentucky's Buckle Up/Phone Down campaign runs concurrently with a nationwide awareness and enforcement effort through Oct. 12 to prevent distracted driving-related crashes. The campaign features videos, radio spots, digital advertising and dedicated website, www.kyhighwaysafety.com to promote the initiative.

“The campaign offers compelling stories from credible sources urging drivers to buckle up and put the phone down,” said Transportation Cabinet Secretary Jim Gray. “We believe that if all drivers practice these two, simple behaviors, we will see many deaths and injuries prevented on our roadways.”

Over the past decade, distracted driving has become one of the leading causes of vehicle crashes on our nation's roads. According to KOHS, each year in Kentucky, distracted driving results in more than 50,000 crashes, more than 15,000 injuries and approximately 200 deaths.

KOHS Acting Executive Director Jason Siwula realizes the temptation to interact with the phone while driving may be difficult to ignore, so drivers should be prepared for a safe journey before getting in the vehicle.

“Pre-enter your destination in navigation, utilize your phone's Do Not Disturb option, put your phone in the glove compartment or give it to your passenger,” said Siwula. “When you get behind the wheel, putting away your phone should be as automatic as putting on your seat belt.”

Both drivers and passengers should buckle up each and every time they get in a vehicle. While more and more cars feature modern safety features designed to assist drivers and prevent crashes and fatal injuries, seat belts still rank supreme. According to KOHS, each year in Kentucky, more than half of those killed in motor vehicles are not wearing a seat belt.

“Sometimes even the most attentive drivers are involved in a crash caused by other drivers,” said Siwula. “That is why wearing your seat belt is the best defense against serious injuries and death.”

Last year, there were 732 deaths on Kentucky roadways.

“While numbers are important to identify potential issues and areas of concern, highway safety is not all about numbers – it’s about people,” said Siwula. “One fatality is simply one too many, so we’re asking for the public’s help. By working together to promote safe driving practices, we can make a difference and save lives.”

As of Oct.6, preliminary numbers indicate there have been 575 roadway deaths so far in 2020, down 21 from the same time last year. Approximately 250 of those deaths were of drivers or passengers who were unbelted and more than 100 involved distraction.

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Editors note: Two Buckle Up Phone Down logos are attached.

Editors note: Download video and radio spots at www.kyhighwaysafety.com