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"Your Local
Health Department"

NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Don't Be Driven to Distraction

Coldwater, MI. With ever increasing demands on our personal and professional time in today's busy society, learning to juggle multiple tasks at once is something we all face daily. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency and the National Highway Safety and Transportation Administration (NHSTA) want to make you aware of a new traffic safety epidemic which has emerged on our roadways and demands immediate attention: ***distracted driving.***

Distracted driving, simply stated, is anything that takes the drivers mind and attention off of the road and compromises safety, not only of the driver, but of any passengers in the vehicle and other individuals on the highway. There are three types of distractions when driving: 1) visual – taking eyes off the road 2) manual – hands off the wheel 3) cognitive – mind off of what the driver is doing.

NHSTA gives the following examples of these three types of distractions:

- Texting
- Using cell phones while driving
- Eating or drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a navigational (GPS) system

- Watching a video
- Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

According to Rochelle Agar, Health Educator at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, “Text messaging is of heightened concern because it combines three types of distraction – visual, manual and cognitive. In other words, texting involves taking your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off the task of driving.”

In 2014, 3,179 people were killed nationwide in crashes involving a distracted driver. One of the most alarming and widespread forms of distracted driving is cell phone usage. According to a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds, the equivalent of driving blind at 55-mph for the length of an entire football field. And a 2014 special article in the New England Journal of Medicine found that the risk of a crash or near-crash among novice drivers increased with the performance of many secondary tasks, including texting and dialing cell phones.

The message from the tri-county health department and NHSTA is simple – “One Text or Call Could Wreck it All.” So the next time you are pressed for time, and it seems like multitasking in the car is the best decision, remember those 3,179 lives that were taken because someone decided they could do two things at once. A text or call is not worth your life, or anyone else's.

To learn more about distracted driving and what you can do to prevent it, visit www.distraction.gov. To receive more information about local health services that can help you protect you and your family, visit our webpage at www.bhsj.org or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/bhsjwic>.

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