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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The “Hands Free Driving Law”

Muncie Indiana - Starting on July 1, 2020 most of the bills that were enacted earlier this year by the Indiana General Assembly will officially become law. Perhaps the law with the biggest impact on the day to day life of Hoosiers is the Hands Free Driving law. Starting on July 1, it will be illegal to operate or hold an electronic device while you are driving a vehicle. This includes texting, making a phone call, searching for directions, checking your fantasy football lineup and anything else you can do with a phone.

Distracted driving is a huge problem in Indiana. Even a brief glimpse away from the road can be enough to cause a crash. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), each day in the United States, approximately 9 people are killed and more than 1,000 injured in crashes that are reported to involve a distracted driver. The numbers illustrating the dangers of cell phone use while driving are downright startling. It is estimated that at any given time throughout the day approximately 660,000 drivers are attempting to use their phones while behind the wheel of an automobile. NHTSA has reported that in 2018 distracted driving claimed the lives of 2,842 people. Among those killed were 1,730 drivers, 605 passengers, 400 pedestrians and 77 bicyclists.

Starting July 1, 2020 if a police officer sees you on your phone while driving, for any reason, you could be subject to a stop and a ticket. A violation of this law is a Class C Infraction and upon a finding of guilty, the person can be fined up to \$500. As always, police officers have the discretion to issue a warning or issue a ticket.

Although the preference would be that phones be placed in do-not-disturb mode while driving, there are plenty of hand-free options available. Many cars now come with the ability to connect with your phone via Bluetooth or a cable for hands-free navigation and phone calls. There are also many different clips and holders that can be used to mount your phone inside your car.

The hope behind this new law is to save lives and reduce crashes. Indiana State Police Superintendent Doug Carter has repeatedly said that law enforcement will not be looking to write hundreds of tickets for this new infraction. Which is the reason for this reminder on the new law. It is our job to keep people safe and I hope people will take this to heart and simply put the phone down when behind the wheel.

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