

News Release

Liz Peters Ph: (204) 262.6039(o) Ph: (204) 797.4326(c) Email: lizp@caamanitoba.com



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For Immediate Release

CELL PHONE BAN CHECK UP: TWO YEARS AND COUNTING

Survey says behaviors behind the wheel aren't changing

With July 15, 2012 marking the second anniversary of Manitoba's ban on talking and texting while driving, a CAA Manitoba survey shows behaviors behind the wheel haven't changed much, but public opinion about the new law is beginning to.

"CAA Members identify distracted driving as the number one road safety concern," said Liz Peters, Public and Government Affairs Manager for CAA Manitoba. "But even though two full years have passed since the law came into effect, they say that motorist habits haven't changed much."

Of the more than 5,600 survey respondents, 99.7 per cent said since the law has been in effect, they still see motorists talking or texting. This number is virtually unchanged from a similar survey in 2011.

"The difference in this year's survey is that on a daily basis, 61.5 per cent of respondents said they see someone talking or texting while driving," said Peters, noting an increase of ten per cent in sightings over 2011.

The largest jump comes from the perception it's unlikely someone talking or texting will be caught by police. Overall, 82.6 per cent of respondents agree that's the case, up 15 per cent since 2011.

CAA has engaged in several public awareness education campaigns to help get the message out that talking and texting while driving is dangerous. Distracted Driving 101, for example, is an annual event that challenges high school students to find out firsthand how distractions impair their driving ability.

Other survey highlights:

Demerits

Opinion about the law being a strong enough deterrent has changed. In 2011, 58 per cent of people said demerits should be added in addition to the 198.80 fine.

"This year, that number jumped, with 66 per cent of respondents agreeing that demerits should be added to the fine," Peters said.

New drivers

When it comes to new drivers – 79.2 per cent of respondents agree that similar to the zero alcohol tolerance policy for new drivers on probation – zero tolerance should also apply to new drivers caught texting or talking behind the wheel.



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New drivers continued...

In addition, 46.4 per cent of respondents said new drivers should also be banned from using cell phones behind the wheel – even if it is a hands-free device.

“The large majority of people agree new drivers need to be sent a strong message before they develop this dangerous habit,” Peters said.

Storage of a cell phone

Knowing so many Manitobans are unable to resist the temptation, we asked respondents where they keep their cell phone while they are driving.

- 27.7 per cent say they keep their cell phone within easy reach
- 17.8 per cent of people say they keep it in the back seat, out of reach
- 50 per cent of people keep it in a purse, pocket, or in their glove box
- Only four per cent of respondents securely mount their phone on the dash as required by law if it is to be used in hands free mode.

Safer Roads

In 2011, about half of all respondents agreed the law has made our roads safer. This year that number dropped to 26.2 per cent of people who agree our roads are safer because of the law.

Peters said overall, the talking and texting ban is the right thing to improve road safety, but until attitudes shift, people will still take the chance behind the wheel.

“Compared to an infraction like drinking and driving - where most motorists view it is completely unacceptable - texting and driving isn’t at the same level of social unacceptability – yet.”

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For more information, please contact:

Liz Peters, Public and Government Affairs Manager
Office: (204) 262-6039
Cell: (204) 797-4326
E-mail: lizp@caamanitoba.com

