

## **New Report Shows States Increasing Efforts on Distracted Driving**

### ***Stronger Laws, Better Data and Greater Focus Among Findings***

WASHINGTON, DC -- Today, the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) released a new report that provides the first comprehensive look at state activities and programs to address the growing problem of distracted driving. The report, "[Curbing Distracted Driving: 2010 Survey of State Safety Programs](#)," details a host of approaches states are implementing. The survey found that states are aggressively pursuing solutions to distracted driving including: stronger laws, increased data collection, new education programs, public/private partnerships and a growing reliance on new media to spread the message.

State highway safety agencies from every state as well as the District of Columbia, Guam and American Samoa participated in the survey. Key findings are noted below.

- **Distracted driving has emerged as a priority for state highway safety agencies.** Twenty-seven states, D.C., and Guam indicated that distracted driving is included in their Strategic Highway Safety Plans (SHSPs). These plans reflect the statewide highway safety priorities of state safety-related agencies including Departments of Transportation, Departments of Motor Vehicles, as well as highway safety offices and many other state and local agencies. The detailed plans are only updated every few years; to already have more than half of the states listing distraction as a priority reflects the states' commitment on this serious issue. GHSA expects additional states to include distraction as SHSPs are updated.
- **States have improved data collection efforts.** In 2003, only 17 states collected information about distraction as a factor in crashes. Today, 43 states and D.C. report they collect this crucial data. Good data is a key component of a strong highway safety program, and GHSA is confident every state will include distraction in the near future.
- **States are educating new drivers about distraction.** In 2003, AAA reported that only five states had distinct distracted driving sections in their driver license manuals. Today, 32 states and D.C. have these sections. Additionally, distracted driving is a component of driver education in 18 states and D.C., and it is a question on the driver license test in 17 states and D.C.
- **States have been passing a variety of distracted driving laws.** Twenty-eight states, D.C. and Guam now ban text messaging by all drivers. The first state to do this was Washington in 2007, so states have been moving very quickly in this area. Seven states, D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands ban hand-held cell phone use behind the wheel for all drivers. School bus drivers are prohibited from talking behind the wheel in 18 states and D.C.
- **States are emphasizing public education.** Thirty-seven states and D.C. have public information/education campaigns to warn about the dangers of driver distraction. Eight states noted they have initiated efforts to provide training or technical assistance to the judiciary on this topic.
- **Public/private partnerships are increasing.** Thirty-five states are working with other state agencies and private employers to address distracted driving. Sixteen states and D.C. have worked with other state agencies or private companies to develop distracted driving policies for their employees.
- **States are using new technology to educate motorists.** Fifteen states and D.C. are using social networking sites like Twitter and Facebook to promote anti-distracted driving messages.

"As a nation, if we are going to successfully address driver distraction, it must be done comprehensively, through a multifaceted approach including education, laws and enforcement, data collection, and private sector involvement," says GHSA Chairman Vernon F. Betkey, Jr. "Our new report shows states are already going down this road. We know from our experiences with drunk driving and seat belt use that there is no magic bullet, and the same holds true with distracted driving."

To continue building momentum on distracted driving countermeasures as well as sharing best practices on a host of highway safety and technology issues, GHSA's 2010 Annual Meeting theme is "Technology and Highway Safety: What's Driving Our Future?" The conference takes place September 26-29 in Kansas City. [More information is online.](#)

"Curbing Distracted Driving: 2010 Survey of State Safety Programs" was completed for GHSA by The Vermette Group in Ashburn, Virginia. [Electronic copies are available online.](#) Printed copies will be mailed to GHSA Members.