DRAFT - SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

**[NAME]** POLICE AWARDED GRANT TO REDUCE DISTRACTED DRIVING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: **[Name, Phone Number]**

City, State - **DATE** - The **[NAME]** police was awarded a grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Office of Grants and Research (OGR) to increase the number of distracted driving patrols during April’s Distracted Driving Awareness Month. **[City/Town]** police will join other departments across the state, along with the Massachusetts Department of State Police in the national *Distracted Driving* enforcement campaign.

"Distracted drivers put everyone at risk, especially pedestrians and bicyclists," said Chief **[Name]** of the **[City/Town]** Police Department. "These funds will increase our traffic enforcement presence. The Massachusetts Hands-Free law is an important tool to keeping roads safe for everyone."

**[Local Data]**

"We are constantly distracted by electronic devices and communications in our everyday lives. These distractions are most dangerous when we're behind the wheel," said Kevin Stanton, Executive Director of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security’s OGR. "We urge drivers to place their cell phones out of reach so that they can focus on safe driving."

"Just drive," said Jeff Larason, Division Director of the OGR’s Highway Safety Division. "The time you spend behind the wheel is, for most people, the most dangerous thing you're likely to do today. Adding distractions, like your cell phone, is irresponsible and dangerous."

DATA:

Although the following trends show a decline, traffic safety experts believe driver inattention is a contributing factor to these incidents:

* The five-year average of traffic fatalities in Massachusetts for 2016 – 2020 was 353, down from 354 reported from 2015 – 2019.
* From 2016 – 2020, 168 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver in Massachusetts. This is a 23% decline from the 217 deaths reported from 2015-2019.
* Fatalities in a crash involving a distracted driver from 2016 – 2020 were 9.5% of all traffic fatalities reported during the same period. This is a significant decline from the 12.3% reported for 2015 – 2019.
* The five-year average of crashes involving a distracted driver in Massachusetts has declined nearly 2% from 11,098 for 2015 – 2019 to 10,885 for 2016 – 2020.
* From 2016 – 2020, serious injuries were reported in 1.8% of all crashes involving a distracted driver. Minor injuries were reported in 13.4% of all crashes involving a distracted driver.
* The five-year average of crashes involving a distracted driver using an electronic device (operating or talking) dropped 5.5% from 3,413 for 2015 – 2019 to 3,226 for 2016 – 2020.
* From 2016 – 2020, serious injuries were reported in 1.6% of crashes involving a distracted driver using an electronic device. Minor injuries were reported in 13.1% of crashes during the same period.
* From 2016 – 2020, nearly 70% of all distracted driving-involved fatalities occurred between 9 am and 9 pm. The period from 12 pm – 2:59 pm was the most dangerous, with 35 of the 168 deaths accounting for 20.8% of fatalities.
* From 2016 – 2020, pedestrians accounted for 49 of the distracted driver-involved crash fatalities. This is an 18.3% decline from the 60 pedestrian fatalities reported from 2015 – 2019.
* Of the 49 pedestrians killed in a distracted driver-involved crash from 2016 - 2020, 24 were age 65 or older. There were only four pedestrian deaths under age 15.

COMPLYING WITH THE HANDS-FREE LAW:

Vehicles without built-in GPS, Apple Car Play, or Android Audio must be equipped with a phone mount on the dash or windshield for GPS navigation.

To properly equip your vehicle, here are the options (most are powered by vehicle cigarette lighter port):

*Vehicles without Bluetooth or an Aux port:*

* Standalone hands-free device with built-in Bluetooth, speaker, and microphone.
* Bluetooth adapter with FM transmitter to use car speakers for audio. Some come with a microphone; others rely on the phone's microphone.
* Single-ear earpiece with Bluetooth to pair with a phone for calls.
* Replacement head unit (if available) that includes either Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, or Bluetooth. Must be professionally installed.

*Vehicles with An Aux port, but without Bluetooth -* Bluetooth adapter that plugs into the cigarette lighter and includes a cable for connecting to aux port for phone audio. Some include microphones and a dash-mountable button to answer calls. Others rely on the phone's microphone.

*Vehicles Equipped with Bluetooth* - A phone mount is all you need for GPS navigation. All phone communication can be routed through the Bluetooth connection.

*To fully comply with the law, using a voice assistant on the phone or through the car's infotainment system is required. Both Apple's Siri and Google Assistant must be enabled and used to issue commands to place calls, listen to text messages and respond to text messages.*

The OGR offers these additional tips for motorists not using hands-free technology:

* Before driving, please turn your phone off and put it out of reach.
* Set your iPhone to "Do Not Disturb While Driving" mode.
* Let your friends and family know that you'll be driving and can't take their calls or texts.
* If you have to make a call or send a text, pull over.
* Watch for pedestrians and bicyclists – especially at night.
* Remember to buckle up! Seat belts are your best defense against a distracted driver.

\*\*\* Media Note \*\*\*

Distracted driving crashes are not "accidents." We urge the media to follow the AP Stylebook, which suggests avoiding the word "accident" for distracted, negligent, drunk, or drugged crashes.

For more information on the OGR’s Municipal Road Safety and distracted driving enforcement grant program, please visit [*www.mass.gov/service-details/traffic-safety-grants*](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/traffic-safety-grants)*.*

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