

# Police have a lot of tools to nab distracted drivers

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ceding that enforcement methods used by officers are constantly adapting to seek out those with bad driving habits.

"HRPS utilizes vehicles that allow officers to clearly observe distracted-driving charges," he said.

"These allow us to hold drivers who choose to hold their phones low in their lap or have a heavy tint on their windows."

The penalty for driving a motor vehicle while holding or using a cellphone is a fine of \$400, plus a victim surcharge and court fee, for a total of \$490 if settled out of court. If a driver receives a summons or chooses to fight the ticket they could face a fine up to \$1,000; upon conviction the driver receives three demerit points.

It is illegal to hold or use phones when stopped at a light, with the exception of calling 911 for an emergen-

cy.

Const. Stevenson noted that distracted-driving offenders cover the full spectrum of demographics, from G2 licence holders to 75-year-olds.

Our first offender on this dry, sunny day is a 25-year-old pickup truck driver from Erin with several speed-related charges on his record. The 'cruiser' slinks up alongside a line of vehicles on Steeles Avenue waiting on a red light turning southbound onto Trafalgar Road, when Const. Stevenson makes eye contact with the accused, who is clearly seen holding a phone in his right hand before dropping it to the floor.

"I asked him what he dropped out of his hand and he said, 'Nothing, the phone just fell off the dashboard.' And I told him I'm not going to argue with you, but you're getting a ticket. He's had reduced tickets that could be at



IFP file photo

**During the month of March, 10 officers in the force's one district response unit (DRU) in Halton Hills and Milton focussed on catching in the act those multi-tasking motorists who just can't wait to send that text or make a phone call while on the road.**

roadside or in court, but that luxury does not extend to hand-held communication devices."

Culprit No. 2 was driving a commercial motor ve-

hicle northbound on Mountainview Road South when the constable noticed the mid-50s' male pecking away intensely on his phone for at least 90 sec-

onds and his head was still looking down as he advanced with neighbouring vehicles on the green light.

Not long after, a 39-year-old woman is nabbed at the intersection of Guelph Street and Main Street North in the middle of texting with a young child in the back seat, her second such offence in the past six months.

If the current penalties aren't enough of a deterrent for those choosing to ignore the law, tougher new rules are expected to take effect later this year, which will make distracted driving even more costly.

The fines for distracted driving would increase from a maximum of \$1,000 to up to \$2,000 on a second conviction and up to \$3,000 for third or subsequent incidents, as well as six demerit points for multiple offences.

Offenders would also see their licence suspend-

ed for three days on a first offence, seven days after two convictions, and 30 days for third and further convictions.

Aside from tracking down distracted drivers, the DRU has a broad mandate when helping keep the community safe, whether it's impaired driving, speeding, commercial vehicle inspections or suspended drivers.

"A lot of our work is complaint-driven," added Const. Stevenson, who recently joined the DRU after four years on patrol in Georgetown.

"The online reporting tool is there for people to share and report traffic issues with other drivers who they've seen or areas where we're getting multiple complaints about speeding or whatever the case. Looking for distracted drivers isn't the only thing we're doing, it's just what our priority is for March."

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