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NEWS



Cst. Marc Taraso Twitter

The number of tickets for distracted driving in Halton have dropped by almost 50 per cent since stiffer penalties came into effect Jan. 1. That would indicate people are keeping their phones out of their hands, but a Halton officer tasked with traffic safety said too many people are still willing to take the risk. Cst. Marc Taraso said it is not uncommon for him to issue as many as 10 distracted driving tickets during a 12-hour shift.

TOUGHER DISTRACTED DRIVING PENALTIES FINALLY HAVING AN IMPACT

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Const. Marc Taraso was hoping he wasn't going to be busy. It was New Year's Day and since the majority of the tickets he issues as a member of Halton regional police's regional response unit are for distracted driving, he hoped the stiffer penalties that were kicking in that day would discourage drivers from picking up their phones.

He had driven just four kilometres from the station before he pulled up beside an SUV stopped at a red light. He watched as the driver, who had two young kids in the back seat, picked up her phone and read a text message for about 10 seconds.

Eight minutes after starting his shift, Taraso was handing out his first distracted driving ticket of the year. The driver, who a day earlier would have received a \$490 fine, was in-

stead hit with a \$615 fine (it can climb as high as \$1,000 if you try to fight it in court and lose), a three-day licence suspension and three demerit points.

"I thought that would have been the time people would have been on their best behaviour," Taraso said.

The stiffer penalties didn't appear to have a lot of impact in the early days of 2019. In the first 17 days

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