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### **DISTRACTED DRIVING GROWING PROBLEM IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY; ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS FOR APRIL**



NORRISTOWN, Pa. – Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele joined with County Commissioner Vice Chair Valerie A. Arkoosh, Abington Township Police Chief William Kelly, who chairs the executive board of both the Montgomery County and Pennsylvania Police Chiefs Associations, and police chiefs from across the county today to announce efforts to curb distracted driving and to spotlight the growing problem of crashes caused by distracted driving in Montgomery County, now ranked as the No. 1 county in Pennsylvania in issuing distracted driving citations.

Distracted driving, defined as any activity that diverts the driver's attention away from the primary task of driving, was the cause in 1,128 reportable crashes in the county in 2014 out of a total of 8,106 reportable crashes. (Reportable crashes involved death, injury or damage requiring towing the car.) While people commonly think of texting as distracted driving, so too are eating, talking on a hands-free or regular cell phone, changing music, using a GPS and other activities. Distracted driving was second only to inexperienced drivers (aged 16 to 20) as the cause of reportable crashes.

"In the five seconds it takes to send a text, a car driving 55 miles per hour covers more than the length of a football field. So while you are not watching the road and focused on your phone, your car is covering that distance essentially driverless," said Steele. "And that is the dangerous situation created by distracted driving."

To combat the problem, law enforcement in Montgomery County will be especially vigilant in identifying distracted driving, as part of April's Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Assisting in that stepped-up effort, the District Attorney's Office has produced a training video for officers in identifying and reporting distracted driving.

The video was produced at the request of Montgomery County Safe Driving Task Force, which based on crash data, decided to focus its efforts on curbing distracted driving.

Also developed in concert with the Safe Driving Task Force is a distracted driving resource page, which is available on the District Attorney's website at [montcopa.org/da](http://montcopa.org/da). The website page includes a list of smartphone apps designed to restrict incoming calls, text and emails while the driver is engaged in the act of driving or while the car is in motion. It also lists distracted driving and safe driving presentations and informational programs available to schools and other groups, as well as websites with more information.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele