

# DISTRACTED DRIVING in Whatcom County, Washington

REPORT CARD No. 1

NOVEMBER 2013



## Distracted Driving – A Growing Threat

- Texting or talking while driving is dangerous, increasing crash risk by a factor of 4 (talking) to 23 (texting).
- Texting is like driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.19 g/dL, well over the legal limit of 0.08 g/dL.
- Distracted driving laws exist in more than 40 states, yet people continue to drive while distracted, putting others at risk.
- Washington's law bans hand-held phone use and texting while driving.

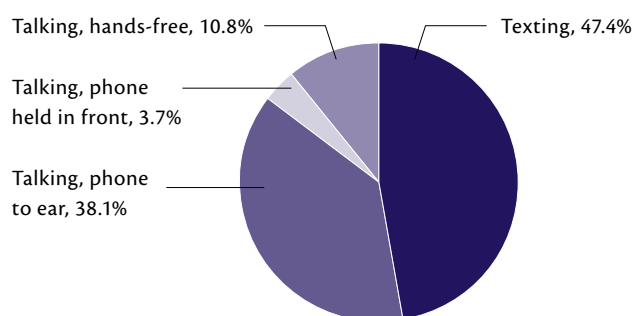
*"Otherwise responsible drivers who talk or text cause collisions that kill or seriously injure others. These drivers are criminally prosecuted, just like other impaired drivers"* — Amy Freedheim, Sr. Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, King County Prosecutor's Office

## Distracted Driving in Washington State

In 2013, researchers at the UW/Harborview conducted the first ever observations of driver texting and cell phone use in Washington.

- Nearly one out of ten drivers (9.5%) were using cell phones or texting behind the wheel.
- Nearly half of the observed distracted drivers (47.4%) were texting.

TALKING AND TEXTING AMONG DISTRACTED DRIVERS IN WASHINGTON



## Enforcement is the Key!

Good laws and good enforcement have made it safer for drivers in the state.

- Active enforcement is key to reducing distracted driving.
- Washington has the highest seat belt use rates in the nation due to active enforcement (2013).
- Enforcement patrols led to a dramatic decline in impaired driving deaths.



## Distracted Driving in Whatcom County

- 12.5% of Whatcom County drivers were distracted (texting or talking on a cell phone).
- Among distracted drivers in Whatcom County, 52% were texting.
- Among drivers talking on the phone, only 10% were using a hands-free device.

DRIVERS OBSERVED USING AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE IN WASHINGTON COUNTIES

