

# CITATIONS FOR DISTRACTED DRIVING in Whatcom County, Washington

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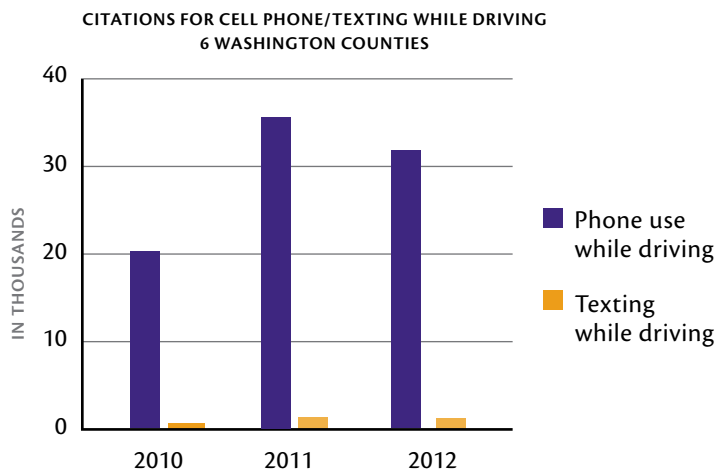
## Distracted Driving – Enforcement is the Key

- Drivers know texting and talking while driving is against the law. However in a recent study, nearly 1 out of every 10 drivers were talking or texting.
- Distracted driving is impaired driving. Using a handheld phone is the equivalent of driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.08. Texting is even more dangerous, with a crash risk higher than driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.19.
- Effective enforcement is key to reducing distracted driving and keeping other road users safe.

*“Now I write tickets. Drivers know that texting is against the law, but some folks think they can get away with it. I figure each ticket could prevent someone else from being hurt or killed.”* — Bellingham Police Officer

## Enforcement in 6 Washington Counties

- Tickets for cell phone use increased after passage of the primary enforcement law (2010).
- Citations for texting while driving have doubled.
- Drivers say that getting a ticket would convince them to put down the phone.



CELL PHONE CITATIONS BY COUNTY IN 2012

County	Cell Phone Citations per 1,000 Licensed Drivers	Texting Citations per 1,000 Licensed Drivers
Snohomish	18.0	0.76
King *	8.3	0.42
Yakima	8.0	0.2
Spokane	7.7	0.29
Whatcom	7.5	0.33
Pierce	6.2	0.61

\* Includes state, county and city laws

## Enforcement in Whatcom County

- Whatcom County officers wrote 1200 citations for talking or texting in 2012 (7.5 citations per 1000 licensed drivers).
- Citation rates in the top performing county were nearly 2.5 times higher than citation rates in Whatcom County.
- Citation rates for texting remain low, though more than half (52%) of Whatcom County distracted drivers observed in 2013 were texting.

## Enforcement Strategies that Work — Tips from Officers:

- Consider distracted drivers as impaired drivers. Distracted drivers put themselves and others at risk of serious injury.
- Tickets are more effective than warnings.
- Detect texting at controlled intersections or run patrols with a designated spotter, like seat belt patrols.
- A higher vantage point for patrols is best. Some agencies use taller vehicles or motorcycle enforcement.
- Officers are public role models. The public expects officers to set a good example in their own behavior.
- Agency policies help. Some agencies have adopted policies to limit cell phone use on the job. Policies reinforce safe driving behavior and protect agencies from legal risk.