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## THUNDER BAY OPP – MARCH NEWSLETTER

### OPP DISTRACTED DRIVING CAMPAIGN

The OPP Distracted Driving Campaign runs from March 14 to March 20, 2016 (during the March Break).

In 2015, the OPP investigated 68 fatalities in which distracted driving was a causal factor. This surpasses the number of alcohol and speed related fatalities investigated by the OPP last year.

The number of alcohol related fatalities in 2015 was 45 and the number of speed related fatalities was 62.

In 2015, Thunder Bay OPP officers charged 19 drivers with distracted driving.

In the North West Region, 178 drivers were charged last year with distracted driving.

Distracted driving refers to all forms of distracted or inattentive driving, such as adjusting a vehicle entertainment or GPS unit or stereo, eating and drinking, using a hand held device, self-grooming or tending to children in the backseat. Drivers need to remember that the true danger to public safety lies in the distraction not the device.

Every driver has a responsibility to direct their entire attention to driving safely.

In Ontario, it is illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or email using hand-held cell phones and other hand-held communications and entertainment devices. Find out the risks of distracted driving, which devices you can and can't use and the penalties you could incur.

### THE DO'S AND DONT'S OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

#### Risks of distracted driving

Good drivers keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road. Research shows that drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be in a collision than drivers who focus on the road. When drivers take their eyes off the road for more than two seconds, their crash risk doubles.



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### Ontario's distracted driving law

In Ontario, it's against the law to:

- operate hand-held communication and electronic entertainment devices while you're driving
- view display screens unrelated to your driving

### Examples of hand-held devices include:

- iPods
- GPS and MP3 players
- cell phones
- smart phones
- laptops
- DVD players

### What's hands-free?

Any device that you do not touch, hold or manipulate while driving, other than to activate or deactivate it. For example, actions such as dialing or scrolling through contacts, or manually programming a GPS device are not allowed.

### Fines / Penalties

As of September 1, 2015 the fines and penalties for distracted driving have increased.

If convicted of distracted driving, a fully licenced driver (holder of Class A, B, C, D, E, F, G) or a hybrid driver (holder of a full-class licence and a novice licence such as Class G and M1) will receive:

- a fine of \$400, plus a victim surcharge and court fee, for a total of \$490 if settled out of court
- fine of up to \$1,000 if you receive a summons or fight your ticket
- three demerit points applied to your driver's record

If convicted of distracted driving, a novice driver (subject to the Graduated Licensing program) will be subject to escalating sanctions:

- first occurrence will result in a 30-day licence suspension
- second occurrence will result in 90-day licence suspension
- licence cancellation and removal from the Graduated Licensing System for a third occurrence

Novice drivers will not be subject to demerit points.



If you endanger others because of any distraction, including both hand-held and hands-free devices, you can also be charged with careless driving. If convicted, you will automatically receive:

- six demerit points
- fines up to \$2,000 and/or
- a jail term of six months
- up to two-year licence suspension

You can even be charged with dangerous driving (a criminal offence), with jail terms of up to five years.

## Exemptions

You can still use hand-held devices while driving in a few cases:

- in a vehicle pulled off the roadway or lawfully parked
- to make a 911 call
- transmitting or receiving voice communication on a two-way, CB or mobile radio (hand-mikes and portable radios like walkie-talkies require a lapel button or other hands-free accessory)

Police, emergency medical services personnel, firefighters and enforcement officers can also use hand-held devices and viewing display screens when performing their duties.

Check the list below to find out if you can use your electronic device while driving:

## In emergencies

Having a cell phone can be an important safety aid for drivers and passengers - whether for personal safety or for reporting a crime or a collision.

## All drivers can use hand-held devices to call 911.

You should only use your cell phone in a situation that could result in a danger to your safety or the safety of others.

If you need to use your cell phone in an emergency, consider the following tips:

- Pull over safely if conditions allow.
- Keep emergency calls as brief as possible.
- Alert the caller that you are on the road.
- End conversations immediately if driving conditions or situations become hazardous (inclement weather, roadway construction, high-speed or high-volume traffic).



- Be alert to situations on the road where a cell phone's radio frequency and electronics may be potentially harmful, such as construction zones where blasting is occurring, or at gas stations and fuelling areas.

## Tips to avoid distraction

There are many simple steps you can take to avoid being distracted while you drive:

- Use your cell phone only when you're parked, or have a passenger take the call.
- Let calls go to voicemail.
- Turn off your cell phone before you start driving.
- Identify and preset your vehicle's climate control, radio and CD player.
- Plan your route and set your GPS before you leave.
- When you're hungry or thirsty, take a break. Don't eat or drink while you drive.
- Avoid other distractions like reading maps, grooming activities and tending to children and pets.

## Devices that can and can't be used while driving

Type of device	Can I use it?	Example
A cell phone with an earpiece, headset or Bluetooth device using voice-activated dialing.	Yes - only to activate or deactivate a "hands-free" function, and only if the device is mounted or secured. Actions like dialing or scrolling through contacts are not allowed.	A mobile phone that sits in a mount attached to the dashboard by Velcro or in a cup holder.
A GPS screen	Yes - provided the GPS is mounted on the dashboard or windshield. You must input the required information <i>before</i> you start driving.	A GPS mounted in a dashboard or on a windshield, as long as it does not block the driver's view.
A portable media player plugged into the vehicle's sound system.	Yes - but you must activate the playlist before driving	iPod
Display screens that are built into the vehicle and used for safety reasons.	Yes	Systems for collision avoidance, information about the vehicle's status, road or weather information.
Audio devices with screens that display still images.	Yes	An MP3 player displaying a still image of the artist or the name of the song playing
Ignition interlock devices.	Yes	



Preceding information provided by Ministry of Transportation.

## OPP RECRUITING SEMINAR

OPP Uniform Recruiting will be holding a Constable Information session on March 30, 2016 at 5:00 pm at the Thunder Bay Detachment. Pre-registration not required. Recruiting Officer, Sgt Denette Maslach will be providing the presentation and will be available to answer any questions.

The OPP continues to seek the most competitive candidates in the North West Region. Monthly information sessions are held at Thunder Bay OPP Detachment in order to assist those interested in policing move forward in the process. The sessions also inform candidates what it takes to be competitive. It's not a mystery that we want the best officers possible.

If you are interested in policing but are not quite sure what it's all about, click on the following link and listen to what officers have to say about their careers in the OPP. Check out the link at: <http://www.opp.ca/ecms/index.php?id=111>

## LAW ENFORCEMENT TORCH RUN 7TH ANNUAL POLAR PLUNGE 2016 IN SUPPORT OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Throw your winter jacket away and slip into a bathing suit , It's time to take the PLUNGE for Special Olympics Ontario!

- When: Saturday, April 2, 2016
- Where: Prince Arthur's Landing at Marina Park Boat Launch - Pearl St. Entrance
- Registration Social: Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at Prince Arthur Hotel - 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. Hand in all fundraising donations and pick up plunge number and incentive prizes.
- Late Registration: Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> from noon to 1:30 p.m. at Prince Arthur Hotel
- Plunge Time: 2:00 pm - Adult Team and Individual Plunge
- 3:00 pm – Special Olympics Athletes
- 3:30 pm - Cool School Plunge
- Awards and Social – Prince Arthur Hotel – Social from 3:00 to 6:00 with Awards at 4:30

This year, the Law Enforcement Torch Run Polar Bear Plunge will raise money for Ontario Special Olympics to support the hardworking athletes who are involved. Special Olympics Ontario provides individuals in our community and across Ontario with an intellectual disability the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation activities.

The goal is to raise \$75,000 at this event!



## Registration Information:

To participate in the 7th Annual Polar Bear Plunge you MUST register online at: [www.polarplunge.ca](http://www.polarplunge.ca) to be eligible for incentive prizes. Registrations will be accepted at Registration Social but we cannot guarantee registration and incentive prizes. Once you register on line you may start your online donation campaign or download the pledge forms to get your friends and family to help you reach your fundraising goal. A waiver form must also be signed online at time of the registration.

## MARCH BREAK SAFE DRIVING TIPS

With March break just around the corner and the kids preparing for a week away from school, this information is to remind drivers to drive more carefully and with extra vigilance. Kids out of school means kids out on the streets and it is up to drivers to make sure those kids stay safe. Slow down, obey traffic laws and be a little more aware of the smaller pedestrians when out on the roads.

### Slow Down and Drive Cautiously

In residential areas especially it's important to slow down and keep an eye out for children playing in the streets. Since the weather is starting to turn towards spring, it is more likely that young children will be outside playing, and that means drivers should be on alert. Use extra caution in the following areas:

- Near playgrounds where children might be playing
- When coming around corners in residential areas, as children might not be visible before taking the turn
- In school zones – even though school is out kids might still choose to play in school playgrounds, so continue to obey all posted speed limits and drive carefully
- Near recreation centers and other places where children out of school might spend more time
- At crosswalks where kids might be trying to cross the street

While it is always advisable to use caution in these areas, during the spring break it is even more important since kids are more likely to be out playing. Being aware of the fact that so many children are out of school is the first line of defense to ensure accidents are avoided. Remember that kids often run out without looking, and can't be depended on to be watching for traffic in the area. Driving more slowly gives more reaction time when a child makes a sudden move. It makes stopping and avoiding an accident easier.



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### Obey the Rules of the Road

All drivers should be obeying the rules of the road at all times, but during times when kids are out of school such as March Break it is even more important to avoid those bad habits behind the wheel.

- Running a red light or a stop sign becomes a much more dangerous move when children might be crossing streets. Higher speeds on the road make it more difficult to come to a stop when a child makes a sudden appearance.
- Be sure to use turn signals so that people on the streets can anticipate where the vehicle will be moving next.
- Avoid distractions behind the wheel such as talking on the phone or texting. Not only are these things illegal and can result in tickets, but they take a driver's attention away from the road when it is needed most.

Keeping all your attention on the road is the best way to ensure the safety of children during March Break.

The preceding information was located on the Insurance Hotline.com information site.

### MARCH BREAK SAFETY TIPS FOR YOUR RESIDENCE

This year, the Lakehead District School Board and the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board will have March break the week of March 14-18.

First and foremost, please watch for children that may be out and about being carefree and playing.

If you are planning to travel during the March break here are a few very important reminders:

- Keep your plans private. Do not talk about your trip on social networking sites. Your personal information can be viewed by many people including potential criminals. Don't talk about your trip in public where unwelcome eavesdroppers may over hear.
- Have a friend or neighbour look in on your house to ensure that there have not been any intruders. Have them pick up your mail and newspapers or stop delivery. Have them clear snow from your driveway or walkway so it appears that someone is home
- Ensure your doors and windows are locked. Use dead bolts and holding bars on your sliding glass doors. If you have a home alarm system, ensure it is activated
- Ensure there is a key holder available in such case the alarm goes off while you are away.





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- Do not leave a spare key where it may be located by a potential criminal. Ensure a spare key is well hidden where only a trusted friend or neighbour will know the location.
- Ensure that your electronics and valuables cannot be seen from the windows. You may want to consider locking valuables and jewellery away in a safe, safety deposit box or secured at a trusted friend's house. Adjust curtains and blinds accordingly.
- Consider setting your lights on a timer instead of leaving them off or on the entire time that you are away. Also consider setting your TV or radio on timers to give your home the lived in appearance. Don't forget exterior lights or have a motion detector light system installed.

### OPP REMIND THE PUBLIC TO BE AWARE OF CHANGING ICE CONDITIONS

Thunder Bay OPP would like to remind the public to be careful when venturing out on the area lakes and rivers at this time of year during the spring melt. Some of the area lakes may have up to 12 inches of ice thickness or more but near some of the islands and rivers where there are varying currents, the ice is questionable.

- Avoid fast moving rivers and hydro dams.
- Always be prepared when you venture out.
- Always advise someone of your destination and when you expect to return, carry a cell phone with you, if possible wear a floater suit and have ice picks available.
- Always know the ice conditions before you venture out.

### Recommended minimum ice thickness is as follows:

3" (7 cm) or less – **STAY OFF**

4" (10 cm) – ice fishing, walking, cross country skiing

5" (12 cm) – one vehicle – snowmobile or ATV

8-12" (20-30 cm) – one vehicle – car or small pick-up

12-15" (30-38 cm) – one vehicle – medium truck

Crime Stoppers look forward to continuing to work with the community on Crime Prevention initiatives. Keep in mind that if you have any information about any crime, we ask that you contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800- 222- TIPS or 623-TIPS or submit a web tip at [www.tipsubmit.com](http://www.tipsubmit.com). Remember your identity will remain anonymous and you could be eligible for a reward of up to \$2,000.00 and you will never have to testify in court.







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March is.....

International Fraud Prevention Month

8 International Women's Day and United Nations Day for Women's Rights and

International Peace "Pledge for Parity"

21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

April is.....

7 World Health Day "Diabetes"

10-16 National Volunteer Week

18-24 National Victims of Crime Awareness Week

If there are other topics you would like addressed in this newsletter or have some ideas, please do not hesitate to call me.

P/C Diana Cole

Community Safety Officer / Media Relations

Thunder Bay OPP

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