

NO WSP GRACE PERIOD ON CELL PHONE ENFORCEMENT

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Washington State Patrol announced today that it will not offer a grace period when texting while driving and failure to use a hands-free device become primary traffic offenses on June 10.

It is common for the state patrol to offer an educational grace period when a new law requires drivers to change long-standing behavior.

"Drivers have already had nearly two years to adjust their driving habits," said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. "We will fully enforce this law from day one."

Laws prohibiting texting and requiring hands-free devices took effect in 2008, but have been considered secondary violations. Officers had to witness some other infraction in order to make a traffic stop. The new designation as primary offenses mean police can stop drivers for a texting or cell phone violation alone.

Batiste is disappointed that the laws' previous status didn't win more voluntary compliance. In some cases there was outright defiance.

"They would look right at our troopers with phones held to their ears," Batiste said. "They knew that without another violation we couldn't do anything."

The texting and cell phone requirements are intended to save lives and reduce injuries by eliminating these two major sources of driver distraction.

Since the laws went into effect in 2008, WSP has written approximately 3,000 tickets and given about 5,900 warnings. The patrol believes the number of collisions caused by inappropriate use of mobile devices is greatly under-reported.

“Few drivers are going to admit they were on a cell phone, or texting, after a crash,”
Batiste said. “We are choosing to take action before a collision occurs in hopes of preventing
these needless tragedies.”

The fine for a violation is \$124.