

Operation Ghost Rider targets distracted drivers across Michigan: What to know



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Drivers, be sure to keep your hands on the wheel and eyes on the road as Operation Ghost Rider is in effect in Michigan.

Law enforcement officials from agencies across the state are launching the initiative Monday, cracking down on distracted driving.

"Despite knowing the risks, distracted drivers continue to put themselves and the innocent people around them in danger," said Jim Santilli, CEO of TIA and chairman of the Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commissions' Distracted Driving Action Team.

Make sure to put your phone away before hitting the road to avoid driving dangers and fines. Using mobile devices for phone calls or social media posts while driving is illegal in Michigan, under legislation in effect since summer 2023.

The operation features unmarked spotter vehicles with a law enforcement officer in the passenger seat, in coordination with the Transportation Improvement Association. When the officer spots a traffic violation, they notify a fully marked law enforcement unit to initiate a traffic stop.

Drivers who use a hand-held device are four times more likely to be in a crash serious enough to cause injury, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Drivers who text while driving are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash.

"Sadly, many people have lost a loved one to a completely preventable behavior. We can all do our part by keeping our eyes on the road and hands on the wheel at all times," Santilli said.

Penalties are: first violation, \$100 fine and/or 16 hours of community service; second or subsequent violations, \$250 fine and/or 24 hours of community service; three violations within a three-year period, driver must complete a driving-improvement course. Violators

can be cited for careless driving, a three-point offense and civil infraction punishable by a fine. Fines are doubled if a traffic crash occurs and the at-fault driver was holding or manually using a mobile device while operating the vehicle.

Operation Ghost Rider has been in effect in Michigan since 2017, with more operations set for 2024.