Drivers Could Pay More for Distracted Driving

SOURCE: THE DAILY TIMES: HANNAH GROVER, HGROVER@DAILY-TIMES.COM

FARMINGTON — Law enforcement officials say careless driving is a big problem with potentially devastating results, and a state lawmaker is hoping to discourage that activity.

Senate Bill 55, which increases the penalties for careless driving, reckless driving and texting while driving, passed the Senate on a 24-16 vote. Sen. Steve Neville, (R) Farmington, sponsored the bill. San Juan County resident Summer Jakino-Whistle helped draft the measure after her father was killed in a crash in Colorado and her mother was injured. The crash occurred when a woman who allegedly was adjusting her radio hit Jakino-Whistle’s parents, who were on a motorcycle.

“Efforts to reduce distracted driving (are) really about tragedy prevention,” Farmington Police Chief Steve Hebbe said in an emailed statement. “(Looking at your phone, looking at your radio, checking your GPS) takes just a couple of seconds, but the results of it are life changing.”

“Distracted driving can seriously hurt innocent people, so it should hurt the distracted driver more in the pocketbook. Maybe that will wake them up to paying more attention,” Neville said in a press release.

There is currently a $25 fine for careless driving, which is defined as the driver not giving full attention to the road. San Juan County Sheriff’s Office Detective Lt. Kyle Lincoln and Sgt. Devon Dollar said that could involve anything from changing the radio station to texting. Senate Bill 55 would increase the fine to $100.

New Mexico First Born Program

The New Mexico First Born Program (FBP) was established in New Mexico in 1997 in Grant County through a “comprehensive community-based collaborative process.” The FBP’s mission is to improve health and wellness for pregnant women and new caregivers via education, support, and other services. The program uses weekly home visits to help families grow healthy relationships while identifying goals, challenges, and opportunities. The services are all free and available anytime during the pregnancy until the child turns three.

The Albuquerque Journal reported that a Rand Corporation study found that newborns enrolled in the FBP were 1/3 less likely to visit a hospital emergency room than newborns in a control group who were not enrolled in the program. FBP families received 28 home visits before the child’s first birthday, and 1/3 of families received prenatal visits. The Journal article notes that the FBP model reduced health care costs by employing a staff model not contingent on nurses. The study specifically noted that home visitors don’t need nursing credentials to ensure a child has a proper child safety seat.
New Mexico Drivers Fair Poorly

A study published by an online car insurance shopping tool, CarInsuranceComparison.com finds that New Mexico drivers are the 6th worst in the nation. That is actually an improvement for New Mexico, which was 2nd worst in the 2015 scores. The website used public data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for its statistical analysis.

Driving in the Wind

Springtime in New Mexico means high winds, especially in the eastern portion of the state. Drivers need to exercise caution and patience on the roadway when navigating high winds. Driving on open stretch of roadways and highway overpasses can be trickier amidst high winds. Many of the safe driving tips for high wind apply in all types of inclement weather or periods of low visibility.

- Keep both hands on the wheel
- Drive slower
- Secure your seatbelt

New Mexico ranked as 11th worst for drunk driving, 17th worst for speeding, and 6th for the fatality rate. The state scored a respectable 36th overall in the “failure to obey” category which includes things like following traffic signals and seatbelt use.

Lifesavers National Conference on Highway Safety Priorities - 2017

The Lifesavers Conference brings together a unique combination of public health and safety professionals, researchers, advocates, practitioners and students committed to sharing best practices, research, and policy initiatives that are proven to work.

Lifesavers is the “premier U.S. highway safety meeting” centered on reducing traffic fatalities and injuries. Held annually since 1982, Lifesavers provides a forum of proven countermeasures and initiatives to tackle the most vexing national traffic safety problems.

The conference has an impressive array of workshops, including tracks focused on older drivers, new drivers, driving impairments, Child Passenger Safety, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and marketing effective traffic safety campaigns.

Safer New Mexico Now presented on New Mexico’s Older Driver Safety Program at the 2016 Lifesavers Conference in Long Beach, CA. Safer contractor Joe Colella presented a workshop entitled “Transportation & Aging: What Stakeholders Need to Know” at the 2017 Lifesavers.

New Mexico First Born Program

The 2016 Annual Report from the FBP stated there were 27,325 home visits to 1,659 families during the last year. That was a 15.2% increase in home visits and 17.9% increase in families served over 2015. The FBP employs more than 100 professionals. The FBP currently covers 16 counties clustered in the western portion of the state stretching as far east as San Miguel and Mora counties.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation and Safer New Mexico Now have partnered with the New Mexico FBP locations in Gallup and Farmington as part of the New Mexico Child Safety Seat Distribution Program.

Driving in the Wind

Springtime in New Mexico means high winds, especially in the eastern portion of the state. Drivers need to exercise caution and patience on the roadway when navigating high winds. Driving on open stretch of roadways and highway overpasses can be trickier amidst high winds. Many of the safe driving tips for high wind apply in all types of inclement weather or periods of low visibility.

- Use your headlights if blowing sand, dust, or precipitation make visibility difficult
- Keep a safe distance behind, and adjacent, to other vehicles
- Watch for objects blowing across the roadway into your path
- Be extra careful in trucks, vans, SUVs, or towing a trailer, as these vehicles may be more adversely impacted by high winds
- If winds are too severe to drive safely, pull onto the shoulder completely away from the roadway and stop

Source links: 1 2
Due to ongoing updates to the calendar of events, please CLICK HERE or visit www.safernm.org for the most current list.

April
National Distracted Driving Awareness Month
Alcohol Awareness Month
4-7 National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training Program – ROSWELL
7 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ROSWELL
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Walmart, 4500 N Main S
Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAS VEGAS
1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., San Miguel Public Health Office, 18 Gallegos Rd.
Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAS CRUCES
12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., Morning Star Methodist Church
8 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ARTESIA
11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Guadalupe Park, 4th & Cannon St.
15 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LOS ALAMOS
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Ashley Pond Park
17-28 Traffic Crash Investigation Training -- ALBUQUERQUE
18 Child Safety Seat Clinic – MORA
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Mora Independent School
20 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ALBUQUERQUE
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Kirtland Air Force Base, Child Development Center Building 20160
22 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAS CRUCES
12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m., Preciado Park NMSU Campus
10-11 Law Enforcement Coordinators’ Symposium: ALBUQUERQUE
10 National Bike to School Day
13 Child Safety Seat Clinic – FARMINGTON
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., San Juan North Plaza, 3040 E 20th St.
Child Safety Seat Clinic – LOS LUNAS
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Los Lunas Sports Complex, SR314 & Morris Rd.
14-20 National Transportation Week and National Police Week
15-26 Advanced Traffic Crash Investigation Training – ALBUQUERQUE
16 Bike to Work Day
18 Transportation Commission Meeting, LAS VEGAS
25 Child Safety Seat Clinic – SANTA FE
8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m., Busy Bugs Early Head Start
27 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ALBUQUERQUE
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Native American Professional Parent Resources, 2201 San Pedro NE
29 Child Safety Seat Clinic – GRANTS
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Grants High School, 500 Mountain Rd.
Child Safety Seat Clinic – JEMEZ PUEBLO
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Jemez Pueblo EMS, 4535 Hwy 4

May
National Youth Traffic Safety Month, Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, and Bicycle Safety Month
1-7 Mini Superblist: ENDWI and BKLUP
6 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAS CRUCES
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., NMSU Fire Dept., 1510 Wells St.
Child Safety Seat Clinic – CUBA
2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., Immaculate Conception Church, 6440 US 550
Child Safety Seat Clinic – PUEBLO OF ISLETA
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m., Pueblo of Isleta Health Center, 1 Sagebrush St.
7-13 National Hospital Week
10 Child Safety Seat Clinic – SILVER CITY
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Gough Park, 1201 N. Pope St.
12 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LORDSBURG
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Lordsburg Special Events Center
19-30 Traffic Crash Reconstruction Training – ALBUQUERQUE
100 Days and Nights of Summer, JUN 23-SEP 30
24 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ROSWELL
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Lovelace Regional Hospital, 117 E. 19th St.
30 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAGUNA PUEBLO
4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m., Laguna Police Dept., 1 Mesita Industrial Pkwy, Mesita Village

June
National Safety Month
Click It or Ticket (National Occupant Protection Mobilization) MAY 22 - JUN 4
1 Child Safety Seat Clinic – HOLLOMAN AFB, 3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m., Holloman AFB, 280 First St., Building 15
2 Child Safety Seat Clinic – SANTA FE
8:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Kohl’s, 4401 Cerrillos Rd.
3 Child Safety Seat Clinic – ALBUQUERQUE
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Lovelace Women’s Hospital, 4701 Montgomery Blvd. NE
3 Child Safety Seat Clinic – RATON
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Kmart, 1235 S. 2nd St.
4 Child Safety Seat Clinic – LAS CRUCES
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Las Cruces Convention Center, 680 E. University Ave.
6-9 National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training Program – FARMINGTON
9 Child Safety Seat Clinic – FARMINGTON
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m., Presbyterian Medical Services, Farmington Community Health Center, 1001 West Broadway

Fitting Stations offer child safety seat inspection appointments during regular hours of operation at ten permanent New Mexico locations.

Alamogordo Third Saturday of each month (505) 439-4300
Albuquerque: NE Second Friday of each month (505) 856-6143
Albuquerque: SW Third Thursday of each month (505) 856-6143
Albuquerque: Central First Friday of each month (505) 272-6024
Artesia Third Saturday of each month (800) 231-6145
Farmington Third Saturday of each month (800) 231-6145
Las Cruces 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month (800) 231-6145
Las Vegas Last Wednesday of each month (800) 231-6145
Rio Rancho First Friday of each month (800) 231-6145
Santa Fe 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month (505) 471-3965 (800) 231-6145
Safer Hosts Buckle Up New Mexico Conference

On March 15-16, 2017, Safer New Mexico Now hosted the annual Buckle Up New Mexico (BUNM) conference at the Sandia Resort in Albuquerque. This training is available to current Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) who participate in New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) programs and Child Passenger Safety (CPS) events.

The BUNM Training provides CPS best practices and education to support traffic safety and occupant protection programs throughout New Mexico. The 2017 BUNM featured presentations on seatbelts in school buses, technology and CPS, pediatric emergency transport, and other current updates and news in the CPS field. The keynote address was delivered by Angela Eichelberger from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Her speech focused on consumer information programs for CPS. Safer also held focus groups to learn directly from CPSTs how to best enhance CPS efforts in New Mexico. Safer held a child safety seat clinic on March 15th at the conference. CPSTs were able to inspect 30 seats during the clinic.

CPSTs are required to earn six Continuing Education Units (CEUs) biennially to maintain their certification. The BUNM training offers the six CEUs required for Safe Kids Worldwide technician recertification. The 2017 BUNM Training was approved by the New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy, the New Mexico Emergency Medical Services Bureau, and the Emergency Nurses Association for CEU accreditation.

Distracted Driving
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

While Dollar and Lincoln support Senate Bill 55, they said it may not make a big difference. While careless driving is a common problem, there are relatively few citations issued for it. “Most people see a cop car coming for miles,” Lincoln said.

Between June 1 and Feb. 1, the sheriff’s office issued 41 careless-driving citations and 24 texting-while-driving citations. In 2016, the Farmington Police Department issued 267 citations for distracted driving, according to an email from spokeswoman Georgette Allen. Allen said the citations were broken into three categories: careless driving, prohibited activities while driving and texting while driving. The majority of the citations — 173 — were issued for careless driving. Police also issued 81 citations for texting while driving and 13 for prohibited activities while driving.

Dollar said it is hard to catch people who are texting and driving unless the officer is in the right place at the right time. “If they see you, you’re not going to catch them,” Dollar said.

Lincoln said the fines do not seem to make a big difference when it comes to some of the more common citations, such as driving without insurance, driving without registration or driving on a revoked or suspended driver’s license. All three of those citations carry a $100 fine. Lincoln said it is not uncommon for an officer to issue those three citations in a single traffic stop. He said sometimes an officer will pull over someone who had received those citations a day earlier. “The monetary value does not seem to affect it,” he said.

Unfortunately, Senate Bill 55 did not continue through the legislative committees but may be proposed at the next session.

Vehicles Miles Traveled Rises Again Nationally

A new report from the Federal Highway Administration indicates that U.S. driving eclipsed 3.2 trillion Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in 2016. That number represents the fifth straight year of increased mileage on public roads. A 13-state “West region” stretching from Alaska to New Mexico saw the largest increase of 2.9%. That West region has seen a monthly increase in VMT dating back to October 2013.

The federal Department of Transportation provides state-specific data and found increases in numerous transportation categories for New Mexico:

- 17.8% increase in licensed drivers (2003-2013)
- 24.7% increase in registered vehicles (2003-2013)
- 9.8% increase in VMT (2003-2013)
- 79.4% increase in transit ridership (2003-2013)
- 7.8% increase in ton-miles for freight flow (2007-2013)
- 10.1% increase in transportation industry jobs (2003-2013)