



University of Central Arkansas Police Department

Protecting and Serving the Academic Community

NEWS RELEASE

UCA Police Department Urges Motorists Not to Text While Driving

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2009

Contact: Lt. Rhonda Swindle, (501) 450-3111, rswindle@uca.edu

UCA, Conway, AR— The UCA community is being asked to help keep our roadways safe by complying with a new state law which bans drivers from text messaging, e-mailing, or accessing information on the Internet with a handheld wireless cellular device. The new law, known as “Paul’s Law,” went into effect on October 1, 2009, according to Lt. Rhonda Swindle, Public Information Officer with the UCA Police Department.

The law was created to improve highway safety by making it a violation of the law to engage in dangerous distractions such as texting or e-mailing. The number of accidents attributed to cellular phone use by drivers has increased both regionally and nationally.

Under existing laws, drivers under 18 are prohibited from using cellular devices and drivers between the ages of 19-21 are restricted to only hands-free cellular devices, Paul’s Law will affect drivers of all ages. And, just like Arkansas’ new seatbelt law, Paul’s Law is a primary offense law. This means that law enforcement officers can stop and cite a motorist for a cellular device violation without having to first have reasonable cause to stop the motorist for other violations.

The new law does not prohibit hand-held use of wireless cellular devices for voice conversations by drivers over 21 years of age. Lt. Swindle advises, “It may not be too long before Arkansas follows other states by mandating hands-free cellular devices while driving for all persons.” Persons performing his or her official duties as a certified law enforcement officer, firefighter, ambulance driver or emergency medical technician are exempt from this law.

Lt. Swindle acknowledges that it may be difficult for officers to determine if someone is violating the new law; however, our mission is to reduce accidents, injuries and deaths on our roadways and, thus, all traffic laws will be enforced. UCA officers will be issuing warning citations for a driver’s first offense; however, second-time offenders may be subject to a district court citation carrying \$150 fine.

For more information about this law, you may visit the Arkansas State Legislature Web site and refer to the following statutes: 27-51-1603/Unlawful Use of Cell Phone While Driving (Under 18); 27-51-1604/Unlawful Use of Cell Phone While Driving (Under 21); and 27-51-1504/Unlawful Cell phone Use While Driving.

###