

Police launch awareness campaign on new mobile phone law



Police Scotland today launches an awareness campaign of the new mobile phone law which comes into place next week and sees a doubling of the penalties faced by motorists who are distracted by using an internet device or mobile phone while at the wheel.

At present, drivers who are stopped while using a mobile phone are issued with three penalty points on their licence and a £100 fine. Under the new legislation, which comes into force on Wednesday, March 1, the consequences double and will be six points and a £200 fine. In more serious cases, police officers have powers to prosecute drivers for careless or dangerous driving.

Chief Superintendent Andy Edmonston, Head of Road Policing for Police Scotland, said: "The risks associated with using a phone while behind the wheel have always been very clear. Any driver will be distracted by a phone call or text message as it affects the ability to concentrate and anticipate the road ahead, putting the driver and other road users at risk.

"Distraction reduces hazard perception and increases reaction times in a similar way to drink-driving, making drivers much more likely to cause deaths and injuries. Drivers who think they can multi-task are fooling themselves: research shows 98% are unable to divide their time without it affecting performance. Talking on a phone hand-held or hands free, texting, emailing, adjusting sat navs, eating, drinking and smoking are all proven to increase crash risk.

“The law says a driver must at all times be in proper control of their vehicle. If at any time they are not they may be guilty of an offence. Police Scotland consistently targets these offences on a daily basis to reduce road casualties and will deal with offences detected in an appropriate manner.

“We are using this change in the law to, once again, reminding drivers that using a mobile phone while driving has always been unacceptable and even careful drivers can be distracted by a call or text – and a split-second lapse in concentration could result in a serious or fatal collision.”