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Star-Telegram

Grand Prairie passes a no texting while driving law

Posted Wednesday, Aug. 21, 2013

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Grand Prairie city officials are sending a strong message to drivers: Get caught texting while driving in Grand Prairie and you'll pay a \$200 fine.

The City Council on Tuesday unanimously approved a new ordinance that bans drivers from text messaging, even when stopped at a traffic light.

Grand Prairie police and the Grand Prairie Independent School District were quick to endorse the ordinance, [according to a news release](#).

"When the state did not pass such a law in the last session, we felt it important for the safety of our streets and drivers to move forward with an ordinance," Police Chief Steve Dye said.

Dr. Susan Hull, superintendent of schools, agreed, and noted, "two of our school buses were hit by drivers who were texting."

Both instances happened last school year and no one was injured.

"They were fender benders," said Sam Buchmeyer, schools spokesman. "But a school bus is a large yellow object that's hard to miss. Yet we had these two incidents.

"Obviously, when we have a lot of high school kids who drive, we want to make sure everyone gets home safely."

Statistics from national organizations attest to the dangers of texting and driving for teenagers and adults, said Amy Sprinkles, city spokeswoman.

A study from the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute indicates that "sending or receiving a text takes a driver's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, [is] the equivalent of driving the length of an entire football field, blind, at 55 mph," Sprinkles said.

She also noted a study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that claims, "text messaging makes a crash up to 23 times more likely vs. three times more likely if dialing, 1.4 times more likely if reaching for a device; and 1.3 times more likely if talking or listening."

The city and school district are installing warning signs at the exits to all parking lots at the city's four high schools, officials said.

An offense under the new ordinance will not be considered a moving violation and will not be made part of a driver's permanent traffic or insurance record, Sprinkles said. Motorists who move out of traffic to text from a parking spot will not be ticketed.

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