**Sample newsletter article**

At any given time of day, about 800,000 drivers are using hand-held cellphones while driving, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA).

That’s slightly more than the combined population of five of the six largest cities in Illinois – Aurora, Rockford, Joliet, Naperville and Springfield.

Now imagine every man, woman and child in those cities talking, texting or surfing the Web on their cellphones – all at the same time – while operating moving vehicles.

It’s time to get serious about roadway safety in Illinois.

More than 3,300 fatalities – about 10 percent of all traffic deaths – occur nationally as a result of distracted driving, according to the NHTSA.

And, in Illinois, nearly 6,000 crashes occurred from 2008 to 2012 in which some form of driver distraction involving a cellphone was cited by police, according to the Illinois Department of Transportation.  Of those, 30 were fatal.

These are preventable tragedies.

In an effort to reduce the number of crashes caused by distracted driving, the Illinois Tollway, Illinois Department of Transportation, Illinois State Police, Illinois Secretary of State and AAA are working together on a statewide campaign to educate drivers about the hand-held cellphone ban that took effect January 1, 2014.

The new state law prohibits motorists from talking on all but hands-free mobile phones while driving.  In addition, the new law imposes fees starting at $75 for drivers caught using a hand-held cellphone while driving.  Drivers could pay $150 for repeat offenses and may eventually have their driver’s licenses suspended.

In addition, the new law imposes stricter penalties following crashes in which electronic devices were being used at the time of collision.  A crash causing great bodily harm can earn a driver up to one year in prison and a fatal crash can result in a prison sentence of up to three years.

The only way to slow down the growing epidemic of distracted driving is by everyone doing their part to make Illinois roads safer.  Drivers need to remember that if they drive with a phone in one hand, they can expect a ticket in the other.

Please visit [www.dropitanddriveillinois.com](http://www.dropitanddriveillinois.com) to learn more about how you can participate in the campaign.