



Florida Department of Transportation

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FDOT and GEICO Encourage Safe Driving and use of "Safe Phone Zones" in the New Year

Tallahassee, FL – As Florida residents head out to New Year's celebrations, games and parades, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) encourages motorists to avoid distracted driving by utilizing the state's "Safe Phone Zones" sponsored by GEICO.

Distracted driving is a concern year-round, but ringing in the New Year brings the added and dangerous occurrence of impaired driving. Unfortunately, as holiday festivities begin, the number of drunk driving incidents skyrockets. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that in 2016 young adult drivers, between ages 18 to 34, were involved in the most fatal drunk driving accidents during the month of December. Young drivers are also prone to distracted driving, and in fact teens were the largest age group reported as distracted at the time of fatal crashes.

GEICO has teamed up with FDOT to encourage use of the state's *Safe Phone Zones*—the sponsorship of 64 FDOT Rest Area, Welcome Center and Service Plaza *Safe Phone Zones* began in 2015. These locations provide a place where drivers can safely and conveniently use their phones and other mobile devices for calling, texting, navigating and accessing mobile apps.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Operations Brian Blanchard said, "Safety for our road users is our number one priority and we encourage the use of GEICO Safe Phone Zones on our state highways to reduce the incidence of distracted driving. Especially during this holiday season, FDOT reminds drivers and passengers to buckle up, follow traffic laws and put the phone down and focus on the road."

NHTSA warns that while anything that takes your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, or mind off the task of driving is a hazard, there is heightened concern about the risks of texting while driving because it combines all three types of distraction—visual, manual and cognitive. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

Motorists are made aware of upcoming locations via highway signs in advance of each facility. The signs read: "Safe Phone Zone" and carry the GEICO logo. GEICO provides similar support

in six other states to promote stopping at rest areas to safely use mobile devices: Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Virginia and Texas.

The national distracted driving effort focuses on ways to change the behavior of drivers through legislation, enforcement, public awareness and education – the same activities that have curbed drunk driving and increased seat belt use. Leading up to the New Year, law enforcement will be working around the clock to keep motorists and their passengers safe as they search for drunk drivers, with NHTSA's *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaign. It is a special year-end mobilization to get drunk drivers off the street and to spread the word about the dangers of impaired driving.

More facts and tips on ways to avoid distracted driving can be found at www.SafePhoneZone.com as well as on the [GEICO More](#) branded content hub.

For more information on *Safe Phone Zones* and Distracted Driving in Florida, visit <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/safety/2A-Programs/Distracted-Driving.shtm>

To join the conversation on social media, use #GEICOSafePhoneZone.

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