



## News Release

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## Minnesota & North Dakota Engage in Friendly Border Competition from Oct. 5-9 to Garner Most *It Can Wait* Pledges

***All Drivers Urged to Take the Pledge to Keep Eyes on the Road, Not on Their Phones; Challenge Hosted by AT&T, Minnesota Safety Council & North Dakota Safety Council***

**MINNESOTA / NORTH DAKOTA, Monday, October 5, 2015** – The states of Minnesota and North Dakota are engaging in a friendly border competition this week to garner the most pledges among drivers to keep their eyes on the road and not on their phones.

Part of AT&T's *It Can Wait*<sup>®</sup> campaign, the pledge challenge is hosted by AT&T, the Minnesota Safety Council, the North Dakota Safety Council and the Toward Zero Deaths coalition.

**The pledge campaign runs from Monday, October 5 until Friday, October 9 at 4 p.m. Minnesotans are encouraged to text ICWMN and North Dakotans ICWND to 464329** and to ask their friends and family to do the same. The state with the most pledges will be announced on Monday, October 12.

“Too many of today’s drivers are engaging in smartphone distractions that are very dangerous and potentially deadly,” said Paul Weirtz, president of AT&T Minnesota. “With this friendly competition, we hope to spread awareness about the dangers across Minnesota and North Dakota and urge all drivers to put down their phones and focus on the road.”

Businesses, high schools, and communities throughout Minnesota and North Dakota are participating in this week’s pledge challenge. The State of Minnesota is asking all state employees to take the pledge, while the Minnesota Department of Transportation (DOT) Commissioner has organized an ICW challenge among all DOT employees.

“Through this border challenge, we hope to drive home the message about the dangers of distracted driving,” said Terry Weaver, traffic safety program coordinator for the North Dakota Safety Council. “Efforts like the *It Can Wait* campaign are critical to helping change driver behaviors and save lives.”

New research from AT&T shows smartphone use has grown beyond texting, with 7 in 10 people engaging in smartphone activities while driving. Texting and emailing are still the most prevalent. But other smartphone use behind the wheel is now common, with 4 in 10 drivers tapping into social media.

Among social platforms, Facebook tops the list, with more than a quarter of those polled using the app while driving. About 1 in 7 say they're on Twitter behind the wheel. Almost 3 in 10 surf the net, and surprisingly, 1 in 10 video chat.

AT&T has expanded its *It Can Wait* campaign from a focus on texting while driving to include these other smartphone activities.

"When we launched the *It Can Wait* campaign five years ago, our message was simple – no text is worth a life," said Cheryl Riley, president of AT&T Northern Plains. "The same applies to other smartphone activities people are now engaging in while driving. No text, post or email is worth a life."

Distracted driving is a contributing factor in one in four traffic crashes. In Minnesota in 2014, distracted driver-related crashes resulted in 61 deaths and over 7,300 injuries, according to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

It is illegal for Minnesota drivers to read, compose or send texts/emails, and access the Internet on a wireless device while the vehicle is in motion or a part of traffic, such as at a stoplight or stuck in traffic. In North Dakota, all drivers are banned from texting while driving.

"Driving is a privilege and an obligation. We have an obligation to drive safely, for our sake and for the sake of everyone else on the road," said Paul Aasen, president & CEO of the Minnesota Safety Council. "Distractions like texting and smart phone use keep us from being safe drivers. If you are behind the wheel, it can wait."

Since its launch in 2010, the *It Can Wait* campaign has:

- Helped drive awareness of the dangers of texting while driving to about 90% for all audiences surveyed;
- Inspired over 7.3 million pledges not to text and drive.

Visit [www.ItCanWait.com](http://www.ItCanWait.com) to learn more.

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