

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NYSEG and AAA New York State Join Forces to Prevent Distracted Driving

*Companies urge drivers to be always be aware
of surroundings after recent accidents*

BINGHAMTON, NY — October 27, 2020 — For the second consecutive year, NYSEG and AAA New York State are partnering together during National Distracted Driving Awareness Month to remind passenger and commercial drivers about the dangers of distracted driving. The companies urge drivers to take charge of eliminating distractions by focusing on the road ahead as visual and mental attention is key to safe driving.

“It’s always imperative to stay alert while driving, but this can be particularly important during the changing of seasons as weather and road conditions shift,” said Trish Nilsen, Director of Emergency Preparedness for NYSEG. “Often, crashes involve vehicles striking electric poles or commercial construction vehicles colliding with power lines and other electric equipment. On average, NYSEG and our sister company, RG&E, are impacted by roughly 450 crashes per year that cause power outages lasting an average duration of nearly three hours. In total, this amounts to more than 6,200 hours of lost time for our customers over the past five years. Staying focused on the road will not only keep drivers safe, but also help to prevent this impact to neighbors and communities. We’re grateful to AAA for their commitment to help prevent distracted driving.”

According to AAA, more than 22 percent of distraction-affected crashes involved confirmed use of a smartphone. Texting and driving can have the same consequences as drinking and driving: deaths and injuries. In fact, distracted driving kills an average of 9 people and injures over 1,000 every day in America.

“Traffic safety is a fundamental part of our mission to be an advocate for motorists and to make roads safer for everyone,” said Elizabeth Carey, Director of Public Affairs for AAA Western and Central New York. “Taking your eyes off the road for just 2 seconds doubles your chances of being involved in a crash. This could not only cost you your life but could also negatively impact society in other tangible ways – as NYSEG mentioned.”

The companies jointly urge drivers to use caution when operating motor vehicles by increasing awareness, keeping mobile devices out of sight to prevent temptation and taking advantage of the “Do Not Disturb While Driving” setting. They also caution operators of commercial construction vehicles to make sure the dump beds of their trucks are down before entering the roadway.

Finally, NYSEG and AAA offer the public the following safety tips should a fallen power line touch your car:

- Stay inside your car. The ground around your car may be energized.
- Sound the horn, roll down your windows and call for help.
- Warn others to stay away. Anyone who touches the equipment or ground around your car can be injured.
- Use your mobile phone to call 911.
- Wait until the fire department, police, or NYSEG workers tell you it's safe to get out of your car before exiting the vehicle.

If your car is in contact with a fallen power line and starts on fire, follow these guidelines:

- Remove loose items of clothing.
- Keep your hands at your sides and jump clear of the vehicle so you are not touching the car when your feet hit the ground.
- Keep both feet close together and shuffle away from the vehicle without picking up your feet.

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