

National Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April to urge Texans to keep their heads up, put their phones down and just drive.

“Distracted driving crashes are 100% preventable, and we’re urging everyone to just drive whenever they’re behind the wheel,” said TxDOT Executive Director Marc Williams. “Texans are killed each year simply because someone was distracted by their phone, radio, navigation system, eating or drinking, or even by others in the car. When your focus isn’t on driving, you’re putting yourself, your passengers and everyone else on the road at risk.”

Distracted driving is not only dangerous, it’s a crime. Since September 1, 2017, it has been illegal to read, write or send a text while driving in Texas, and violators can face a fine of up to \$200.

TxDOT offers these tips to

prevent distracted driving that can lead to a ticket or preventable crash:

- Always give driving your full attention; remember that any distraction is dangerous.
- Pull off the road entirely and come to a complete stop before you talk on your phone or text.
- Put your phone away, turn it off, or use an app or your phone settings to block texts and calls while driving.
- Tell friends, family and coworkers you won’t respond to texts or calls while driving.

As part of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, TxDOT is conducting Talk. Text. Crash. outreach events around the state that feature an immersive TV wall with a touch-free driving simulator to give participants a real-life sense of how distractions affect driving. There will also be tips and facts that’ll help remind everyone to give driving their

full attention. Event schedule: April 23 - Houston, April 24 - Arlington, April 30 - McAllen

TxDOT is also relaunching its web-based augmented reality game “Dart Those Distractions” to reinforce the importance of paying attention behind the wheel.

The Talk. Text. Crash. distracted driving awareness campaign is a key component of #EndTheStreakTX, a broader social media and word-of-mouth effort that encourages drivers to make safer choices while behind the wheel, like wearing a seat belt, driving the speed limit, never texting and driving, and never driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. November 7, 2000, was the last deathless day on Texas roadways. #EndTheStreakTX asks all Texans to commit to driving safely to help end the streak of daily deaths on Texas roadways.

particularly hard.

A continuing shortage of truck drivers has driven freight rates back above their pre-pandemic highs. Rail rates for bulk farm commodities have been, in part, driven up by limited rail terminal capacity.

“Uncertainty fuels volatility, and that’s certainly what we are looking at right now for this crop year,” Adams said. “Then, you add in the drought conditions, wildfires and severe weather that comes with the spring, and farmers are rolling the dice with more odds this growing season.”

The net market return for commodities across the board may exceed that of 2021, but without the pandemic-linked government payments of the last two years, net farm income will likely be down in 2022, according to AFBF.

For more reports and the latest AFBF economic analyses, visit fb.org/market-intel. April

On This Day in Texas History

April 22, 1873

On this day in 1873, the state legislature repealed the law authorizing the State Police. A response to the lawlessness and chaos that prevailed under Radical Republican rule during Reconstruction, the Police Act of July 1870 authorized a force of 257 men, though the force never had as many as 200 members. The fact that the force employed blacks and was controlled by Gov. Edmund J. Davis made it unpopular. Some members of the force certainly deserved criticism. Capt. Jack Helm, for instance, was accused of murdering prisoners. In 1872 James Davidson, the head of the force, embezzled \$37,000 and disappeared. After repeal of the authorization law, Leander H. McNelly and at least thirty-six other State Police members became Texas Rangers.

Production costs outpace commodity prices

The cost of growing crops could outpace revenue for many farmers in 2022, making it more difficult to break even despite rising commodity prices and increased demand both domestically and globally.

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) published a report that shows farm production costs are likely to increase 6% in 2022, which follows a 12% increase in 2021. This continues a trend stretching back several years.

Since 2013, farmers have seen almost all production expenses increase, AFBF noted. For example, livestock and poultry expenses have gone up 46%, and marketing, storage and transportation costs have increased 59%.

Farmers are seeing a number of production cost increases, including rising fertilizer, seed and chemical prices, which now make up to 17.5% of on-farm expenditures.

Fuel and energy prices continue to increase, and the situation is made worse by uncertainty due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Increased costs of labor, both on-farm and for agribusinesses serving farms, is also a challenge.

AFBF noted farmers and ranchers are still feeling the impacts of the COVID-19 disruption of labor markets and production.

“The rising prices for fuel, fertilizer and other supplies create an unwelcome counterforce to higher commodity prices,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “Higher prices for crops are getting a lot of attention right now and, of course, help farmers balance the books, but when expenses are rising just as quickly or even outpacing revenue, the financial gains evaporate.”

AFBF and Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) are working to ensure the administration and Congress understand the severity and potential

implications of increased production costs and the limited availability of some supplies.

“Farmers and ranchers have always had to carefully manage input costs, but the COVID-19 pandemic and now the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have ushered in even more uncertainty and higher costs for inputs,” TFB National Legislative Director Laramie Adams said. “We are in constant communication with elected officials and federal agencies to inform them on how these issues affect farmers, ranchers and rural communities in the Lone Star State.”

The invasion and subsequent sanctions against Russia could further complicate U.S. fertilizer supplies and prices.

Crop protection chemicals and land values have also increased, tightening what could have been above breakeven profit margins.

And ongoing transportation

issues are fueling concern and uncertainty, AFBF economists noted.

No part of the transportation sector has been spared supply-chain disruptions, with higher rates and shipping delays often hitting farmers and ranchers

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