



Watertown Police Department News Release

Type of Incident	Date of Release	Time of Release
Distracted and Impaired Driving Simulators at WHS	1/24/12	10:30 AM

Narrative

The Watertown Police Department, the Watertown School District, and State Farm Insurance-Ken Sinner Agency have partnered together to bring a Distracted and Impaired Driving simulator to Watertown High School from Tuesday, January 24th through Friday, January 27th. High school students will get a chance to *drive* the simulator, which is used to reproduce the effects of distracted or impaired driving. Students will see firsthand the potential ramifications of drinking or texting while driving in a controlled, safe, simulated environment. Police officers and drivers' education instructors will be on hand to speak to the students about drunk and distracted driving.

The simulators consist of a driver's seat and steering wheel from a car mounted in a steel frame with three computer monitors wrapped around the driver. When in distracted driving mode, the simulator interacts with the driver's own cell phone to send and receive text messages. Meanwhile, an occasional deer or vehicle crosses the road in front of the driver.

When used in impaired driving mode, the simulators respond to steering and braking input slowly to replicate the effects of alcohol or drug impairment. The scenarios unfold based on the driver's ability to navigate the roadway. Ultimately, the driver gets into a collision, is stopped by a police car, or encounters a sobriety checkpoint.

Verne Eide Motorcars of Sioux Falls purchased three of these simulators late last year. They are partnering with the Sioux Empire Safety Village (also of Sioux Falls) to coordinate the distribution of the simulators to area schools and drivers' education programs. A grant from the SD Office of Highway Safety covers a portion of the expenses related to transporting the simulators to area communities, maintenance costs, and processing the data collected by the simulators. The local communities who utilize the simulators are responsible for the remaining portion of the expense. State Farm Insurance – Ken Sinner Agency (of Watertown) paid the share of the expenses associated with bringing a simulator to Watertown.

If any members of the media are interested in viewing or photographing the simulator in action, or would like to interview officers or students who have driven the simulator; please contact Captain Ryan Remmers at 881-7303.

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