

Communities start to fine for texting and walking

By Melissa Nann Burke, The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal

If you're reading this story on your smartphone while walking, you're looking in the wrong place.

A growing number of communities are trying to get that message across to stave off pedestrian accidents that can happen when people walking become too engrossed with their phones.

This spring, Fort Lee, N.J., police began issuing \$85 fines for careless walking, and the Utah Transit Authority made distracted walking around trains punishable by a \$50 fine.

- **STORY:** [As U.S. road deaths drop, more pedestrians getting struck](#)

Delaware has taken a different approach, placing about 100 large stickers with the words "LOOK UP" on sidewalks near crosswalks in Wilmington, Newark and Rehoboth Beach, urging pedestrians to pay less attention to their phones and more to what's going on around them.

"Delaware may be breaking some new ground," says Jonathan Adkins, spokesman for the Governors Highway Safety Association, which tracks state highway safety campaigns. "It's really an emerging issue."

Nabree Tilghman, 18, slowed his walk slightly to check his Android smartphone as he approached an intersection this week in Wilmington, Del.

"If you're aware of your surroundings, it's safe. You just have to be smart about it." said Tilghman, a student at Delaware Technical Community College.

Tilghman admits he has, on occasion, tripped while texting and crossing the street, but says he hasn't run into anyone or had close calls with a moving vehicle.

Others haven't fared as well. Research from Ohio State University showed cellphone use by pedestrians led to more than 1,000 emergency-room visits nationwide in 2008.

In March, a 45-year-old woman had to be rescued from Lake Michigan after she fell off a pier while texting and walking, police said.

"When people are talking on cellphones, texting or even listening to music, unfortunately, they're not as aware of what's going on around them," said Police Lt. Mark Farrall in Newark, Del