

SE will vote Monday to ban texting while driving

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By Jeff Piorkowski
jpiorkowski@sunnews.com

SOUTH EUCLID — City Council is expected to vote Monday, it's first meeting of the new year, on legislation that would ban text messaging, hand-held cell phone use and manipulating computers while

one is driving.

Following the legislation's expected passage, an "educational period" will go into effect to make the public aware of the change. That education period will last until April 1.

"We'll post signs at the main entrances of the city to

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TEXTING

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let people know the city has an ordinance against (text messaging and hand-held cell phone use)," said Police Chief Kevin Nietert. "We can also let people know about it by sending them an e-mail and by having (the information) put on the (message) board in front (of city hall, 1349 S. Green Road)."

The information will also be included in the city's quarterly news update mailed to residents.

Council's Safety Committee held its second meeting devoted to the subject Dec. 28. The committee unanimously agreed to pass the legislation, requested by Councilman at-large David Miller, on to a full council vote Monday.

"We're so distracted by technology it's a danger to have in our automobiles," Miller said. "We're looking at what is the health and safety of our community."

"There are people reading a book and drinking coffee while they're driving," added Council President Moe Romeo amid committee discussion as to the many things people do while driving.

Niertert said violation of the law would be a primary offense, meaning drivers could be stopped if seen holding a cell phone to their ear or texting. That makes it unlike the seat belt law, in which officers cannot stop motorists for not wearing seat belts, but can tack on a charge for not using them if a motorist is stopped for another, primary offense.

"This would not be an ordinance we would make a prior-

ity," Nietert said. But, the chief said if someone were holding up traffic because they were not paying attention while talking on a cell phone, "then I could see an officer pulling over the driver."

The ordinance can have amendments added to it in order to include banning additional communications devices in future years as technology advances.

The legislation will allow officers to use cell phones, computers and text messaging while driving only if official business calls for such use.